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# Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study

by

Vance T Bradford

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University  
2018

Abstract

Homeschooling Parents' Perceptions of Resources for Curriculum Development

by

Vance Tasker Bradford

MEd, West Texas State University, 1970

BA, Wayland Baptist University, 1968

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

July 2018

## Abstract

Homeschooling families in the state of Texas face challenges when developing their children's learning curriculum as they attempt to address state mandates with only limited guidelines for developing effective curricula and evaluation strategies to measure student learning. The resulting problem is that homeschooling parents are left to develop their curricula with little guidance. The absence of such guidance may create undue pressure for both the homeschooling parent and their child, while simultaneously creating the possibility of limiting student achievement. The purpose of the project study was to explore the challenges parents face in developing their homeschool curriculum in the state of Texas. Using the theoretical framework provided by Bronfenbrenner's process-person-context-time model, 10 homeschooling parents from 10 different families shared their experiences to address the guiding research question, which explored motivational factors in the design of homeschool curricula, including the use and sharing of resources. Through the use of a qualitative case study that employed semistructured interviews and field notes as sources of data, 5 themes emerged following a narrative analysis process to code the data: (a) time with family, (b) safe learning environment, (c) practical and meaningful lessons, (d) socialization, and (e) biblical training. The findings were developed into a white paper to provide parents with strategies to embed these 5 themes into a useful, quality homeschool curriculum. This project study has implications for positive social change by providing homeschooling parents in the state of Texas with curriculum design guidance from fellow homeschooling parents that can provide a basis for developing quality curricula that reflects common core values within their community.

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## Dedication

The dedication of this study goes to Suzanne, my wife, who passed away on March 21, 2017. She inspired me to continue this doctoral journey. Even at this late stage of my life, I wanted to pursue my doctoral dream, and Suzanne encouraged me to pursue this dream. Suzanne endured the unending task of reading my project study numerous times. She made constructive comments throughout my doctoral journey. I can still remember the times that she would stay up all night with me with my classes. I do miss the gentle squeeze of her hands on my shoulders, and she would whisper the words, "You can do this." I must also include my mother, Jean Bradford, who passed away on May 21, 2017. She had Alzheimer's. I can remember the times when she would come to my study and ask, "How are you doing?" or "Is there anything that I can do to help?" She did not understand the work requirement that I endured with Walden University. My general response to my mother was, "Just be there." Now, they are both gone.

As I pursue this doctoral journey, I remembered the story when God blessed Elizabeth at an old age with a child named John the Baptist. In Luke 1:25, it reads, "The Lord has done this for me." Even at my old age, I honestly feel that I would not be where I am without the Lord's grace, compassion, and guidance. I want to acknowledge my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave me the strength to endure this doctoral journey. Yes, He deserves all of the praise.

## Acknowledgments

The journey was not an easy task, and I struggled every day to find serenity and strength to pursue this mission. I am sure that numerous people have felt the pressure of pursuing their doctoral journey, and I am thankful to the professionals who worked tirelessly with me on this project. During my journey, I must share my appreciation with Drs. Jennifer McLean, Sushil Jindal, and Stephen Butler. There were times that I thought I was in a “fog” with no directions to go, but Drs. McLean, Jindal, and Butler were able to share their insights as to how to pursue this doctoral journey. I also want to acknowledge the patience of the homeschoolers who worked with me during this study. Without them, this project would not be possible.

Again, my wife, Suzanne, and our two children, Brian and Vanessa, have lifted me in their prayers, and they have given me support and encouragement throughout this project. I only wish my wife, Suzanne, were alive to see this doctoral dream come to its conclusion.

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## Section 1: The Problem

### **Introduction**

In the United States, compulsory education up to 18 years of age has existed since the 1850s (Gaither, 2017; Urban & Wagoner, 2014). Although most U.S. children obtain their education through public or private schools, some parents/guardians homeschool their children (Pannone, 2014; Ray, 2018). Gaither (2017) claimed that most parents/guardians homeschooled their children at certain times. Parents/guardians can homeschool their children on a full or part-time basis, but regardless of the amount of time spent, the process of homeschooling requires a significant amount of planning and curriculum development (Wise-Bauer, 2016).

The purpose of the research project was to explore the challenges homeschooling parents/guardians face in developing their children's curriculum, and how they plan and execute their children's learning curriculum. I examined the resources parents/guardians used in developing their children's education curriculum with the feasibility of promoting a white paper designed to assist first-time parents/guardians along with veteran homeschoolers to find homeschooling resources that can be used to meet their children's learning curriculum needs. This exploration is vital to the development of both homeschooling and public and private learning curricula, where a growing disparity exists between the different educational systems.

The primary purpose of homeschooling is to allow parents/guardians to teach their children (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2012; Weldon, 2010; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). Before homeschooling was legal in the United States of America in 1993,

some homeschooling parents or guardians kept their practices a secret due to the strong school mandatory laws from some of the individual states (Gaither, 2017).

The contemporary homeschooling movement began in the mid-1980s, at a time when the homeschooling population in the United States was in a five-digit figure, and in 2007, there were 1.5 million homeschooled children which grew from 1.1 million children in 2003 (Greenwalt, 2016). It was also a time when parents/guardians began to question the role of government schools in three broad areas: (a) the need for safe school environments, (b) the lack of religious or moral training, and (c) the discontent of academic instruction (Greenwalt, 2016). Parents/guardians may also oppose the concept of public schools casting a broad or general scope that accepts pluralistic, diverse differences that some families may have (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2013). Some fear that pluralistic, diverse settings would allow children to “coast or hide” their academic weaknesses in large public classrooms with high student-to-teacher ratios (Murphy, 2012, p. 157). Homeschooling families can determine their learning curricula with lower child-to-educator ratios (Murphy, 2012; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

Though homeschooling families have increased flexibility in choosing their learning curricula, not all states govern homeschooling the same way, and the state school laws differ extensively (Gaither, 2017). In some heavily regulated states, such as Massachusetts, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont, educational agencies require homeschooling parents/guardians to submit homeschooling applications for their children with the local school districts and to have their homeschooling curricula evaluated by local or state school officials (Gaither, 2017). By



contrast, other states, such as Alaska, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas, do not require homeschooling parents/guardians to notify or to submit lesson plans to public school authorities for review and approval (Gaither, 2017). Still, other states require homeschooling families to have their curricula approved by certified teachers (Gaither, 2017). Regardless of the governing regulations from the individual states, homeschooling parents/guardians who want to provide a quality education for their children need to select learning resources and materials that will increase their children's autonomy and self-reliance (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

Higgins, Xiao, and Katsipataki (2012) posited that the quality of any curriculum should be evaluated based on whom it may benefit. Since most homeschooling parents/guardians are not certified teachers, one of the challenges they must consider is how to delineate the scope and sequence of how skills are taught to meet the educational needs of their children (Means, Padilla, & Gallagher, 2010). In this qualitative research project, I focused on the homeschooling curriculum used by parents/guardians in the development of their children's curriculum. Regarding the numerous states that do not require homeschooling curriculum evaluated by school authorities, the state of Texas falls into that category. Therefore, the state of Texas was an ideal location to conduct this qualitative research project. In the state of Texas, homeschooled children's curriculum must include reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and citizenship (Texas Education Code, Section 25.086; Williams, 2013). With this broadly defined curriculum, homeschooling families have the wide latitude to select sources to meet the curriculum requirements for the state of Texas.

### **Definition of the Problem**

In the state of Texas, parents/guardians are not required to make physical appearances with school officials, receive home visits from school officials, submit test scores to public school officials, or present their children's curricula for review (Ainsworth & Dhanji, 2013). The state of Texas currently has three conditions for homeschooling: (a) performed in good faith, (b) delivered visually, and (c) contains reading, spelling, arithmetic, grammar, and citizenship (Texas Education Code, Section 25.086). With the above exceptions, the state of Texas offers no guidelines or templates for homeschooling parents/guardians to use when developing their children's learning curricula.

At a local church, one of the homeschooling support groups, Tejas Homeschooling Association (THA), a pseudonym, has members who meet at least once a week in each of the two, 16-week semesters of an academic year. The primary THA goals were twofold: (a) to provide positive social settings among the youths, and (b) to provide opportunities for collaboration between homeschooling adults. Some of the homeschooling adults conduct special classes for homeschooling children in a wide-range of subject matter, including Western civilization, writing projects, drama, art, music, advanced mathematical tutoring classes, and homemaking cooking skills.

The collaboration between parents/guardians includes discussing their educational goals with their children while at the same time meeting the curriculum requirements from the state of Texas. It is possible that during these collaborative moments that some homeschooling households may draw support from other parents/guardians. Wong and

Wong (2014) claimed in their recent book, *The Classroom Management Book* that successful teachers must seek organizational support, instructional support, and emotional support when teaching children, which are the primary purposes of what THA does for homeschooling parents/guardians. Based on some parent/guardian educational philosophies, families may refuse to adopt formal curricular plans and pursue a more eclectic approach to teaching their children (Kumar, 2013). Others may follow unit study methods by combining the academic subjects of history, language arts, mathematics, music, or science to pursue particular interests of their children (Crabtree, 2015).

However, some homeschooling families may question the motives used by the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) and the National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) for their strong statistical support for homeschooling (Brightbill, 2013; Stollar, 2014). Brightbill (2013) questioned the validity of homeschooling studies sponsored by HSLDA and NHERI, which are strong proponents of homeschooling. Brightbill claimed that NHERI research studies were “self-selected” and the studies were “intended to make homeschooling look good” (2013, para 5). There are cases where parents/guardians may not exercise good judgment when homeschooling their children (Stollar, 2014). For example, Stollar (2014), a homeschool graduate, shared stories of how parents with good intentions were not preparing their children for uncertain realities facing them outside of the homeschooling communities in regards to child abuse, mental illness, or potential sexual encounters. Brightbill (2013) claimed that the studies made by HSLDS and NHERI do not share some of the real challenges that homeschooling families face.

As a test group, THA represents a small homeschooling population in the central part of the state of Texas, and the study was not intended to be generalized as to mirror the homeschooling communities throughout the United States of America. The intent of the study was to seek how selected parents were developing their children's learning curricula.

### **Rationale**

Parents/guardians who develop customized learning curricula for their children must consider the challenges they face when developing their children's education curriculum. Understanding the processes that parent-educators use when constructing their homeschooling curricula can aid others in becoming effective parent-educators and can support the efficient achievement of learning outcomes for their children. In this exploratory qualitative case study, I targeted homeschooling parents/guardians who reside in a rural, six-county area in the state of Texas.

The exploratory case study can provide insights as to the how and why individual families choose specific learning materials for their children's learning curriculum (Yin, 2014). One of my goals was to describe how parents/guardians develop educational curricula to meet their children's educational needs. I collected information from homeschooling participants from 10 different families with the intent of exploring the challenges they faced and the resources they used in developing their children's curricula.

### **Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level**

Parents/guardians find that homeschooling, a daunting and challenging task, requires them to locate, research, and select the educational curricula to meet the

educational needs of their children (Gaither, 2017; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Wise-Bauer, 2016; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). The motives that parents/guardians have for homeschooling their children may affect how homeschooling resources and learning materials are selected and assembled for their children's learning curriculum (Thomas, 2016). In a private discussion on July 6, 2014, a homeschooling parent stated, "It is difficult to build a learning program for my children, but with the help of other parents, I can do this." In another private discussion on July 6, 2014, a homeschooling parent said, "There are at least 32 families [assigned to THA] who either possessed high school diplomas, completed college courses, or [were] college graduates," and to her knowledge, "not all of them teach their children or develop their learning curriculum the same way." Even with the broad range of homeschooling methods, Kunzman and Gaither (2013) added that it was constructive for parents/guardians to share their ideas, techniques, and learning sources with other homeschooling families. This cooperative effort can efficiently promote stronger and more refined homeschooling practices.

### **Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature**

*The Daily Iowan* Editorial Board (2013) opined that homeschools can provide a beneficial education for some students, and it provides "a legitimate option from parents who believe their children would be better served learning at home" (13th para). Some scholars (see Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2012; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016) suggested that highly motivated parents/guardians can select their resources wisely and efficiently with the intent of producing self-efficacy within their homeschooling practices. In the area of academic achievement, Murphy (2012) suggested that

homeschooling students performed well in core subject areas of mathematics, reading, and language arts.

Tate (2016) opined that most college admission officers have favorable perceptions of homeschooled graduates who attend their colleges and universities. Some homeschooled students demonstrated a high propensity to learn and a willingness to handle the rigors of scholarly learning in colleges and universities (Ray, 2018; Wise-Bauer, 2016; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). Some scholars suggested that public and private educators should consider the development of the individualized learning activities that are currently being practiced by some homeschoolers (Gardner & Davis, 2013; Murphy, 2012; Puerling, 2012), and Olsen (2008), in an older study, believed it would be beneficial for public and private educators to examine, understand, and appreciate the learning methods used by homeschooling families.

### **Definition of Terms**

Defining the terms used throughout the study is essential. These terms include the following,

*Content-based transcripts:* Complete transcripts designed to list the titles of books and textbooks used while homeschooling (Becker & Kummer, 2015).

*Curriculum:* A set of courses and written materials from different sources used in educating children (Murphy, 2012).

*Deschooling:* A period in which parents/guardians along with their children take time off from school to assess their skills and knowledge; they, then, proceed to reacquaint themselves with their interests and talents (Rivero, 2008; Takahashi, 2017).

*Eclectic approach:* Involves a composite of learning style that may include traditional methods that are similar to public school settings, unit studies, and unschooling methods designed to meet the interest of the children (Mwanza, 2017).

*Guardians:* Homeschooling educators who have the legal and moral responsibility to take care of their children.

*Homeschooling:* Also known as *home schooling*, *home education*, or *home-based education* (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). Scholars agree that the homeschooling parents/guardians are the principle teachers of their children with the goal of providing a safe learning environment in or near their homes (Ray, 2018; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

Groce, Wilson, and Poling (2013) offered a broader definition of homeschooling by suggesting that it is a process of learning and having interactions with abundant resources found in the local communities, cultural settings, and with other homeschooling families. Berer (2016) postulated that homeschooling should cover more of a diverse spectrum of learning activities (e.g., field trips, lectures, historical reenactments, or other community events) than those learning activities that only occur at the family home.

*Ideologues:* Ideologues who have strong views or ideas may include religious freedom, family values, creation versus science, or other issues that conflict with the views and beliefs shared by others (Ideologues, 2007).

*Ideology:* A systematic set of ideas, beliefs, or opinions about one's culture or setting (Ideology, 2007).

*Konos:* Also written as *KONOS*, it is a Greek word that means inverted cone. The base of the cone contains all of the subjects (e.g., mathematics, music, science, history,

language arts, and other core subjects) that are used to study a particular unit, which would be the apex of the cone (Kunzman, 2009).

*Learning resources:* Include textbooks on selected subjects, workbooks, Internet services, literary books, learning journals, and learning videos designed to assist homeschoolers with their school lessons (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

*Motivational factors:* The reasons why parents/guardians wish to homeschool their children. Factors include empathy, altruism, and moral development (Clark, 2013).

*Parents:* Homeschooling educators who are blood relatives, mothers, and fathers and who have a moral responsibility to care for their children.

*Pedagogues:* Individuals who practice the skills of assisting children to learn (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

*Pedagogy:* Originated in the French and Latin languages meaning boy or child leader and the term includes the activities of teaching and parenting of children (van Manen, 2016). However, *pedagogy* has expanded to mean the science and art of teaching children by using acceptable or current teaching practices to transform well-known facts or knowledge into complex or unfamiliar concepts (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2013).

*Special needs:* Used to describe children with mild problems or differences, such as a lisp, shyness, or other learning challenges requiring special assistance (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

*Traditional conventional homeschools:* The practice of teaching children at home that includes lesson plans, textbooks, quizzes or tests, subject-specified projects, and grades (Witmond, 2013).



*Trivium approach:* A Latin term meaning three roads, which include grammar, logic, and rhetoric (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

*Unit-study method:* A learning process that allows students to investigate particular topics that may interest them by using different subject matter (Crabtree, 2015).

*Unschooling method:* A child-centered approach to teaching children to follow their impulse with little or no interference from the parents/guardians (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

### **Significance of the Study**

Murphy (2012) and Wise-Bauer and Wise (2016) suggested that homeschooling should not necessarily be examined by the size of its population but by its potential as a legitimate educational alternative to teaching children in the United States. One of the strengths of homeschooling is that it allows parents/guardians to modify their children's learning curricula to meet their potential needs (Gaither, 2017). Lyons (2015) claimed that homeschooling is a growing family enterprise because it simply works.

Homeschooling allows parents/guardians to fulfill their expectations of their children's education (e.g., forging a healthier parent/child relationship, keeping children separated from negative peer pressures, and pursuing the interests and talents of their children).

However, one of the concerns about the Texas Education Code is that it does not currently specify the way in which homeschooling parents/guardians are to develop their learning curricula. The state of Texas does stress the importance of reading, spelling, grammar, math, and a course in citizenship (Texas Education Agency, n.d.; Williams, 2013). Williams (2013) considered homeschooling households as uncertified private

schools, but if homeschooling parents/guardians wish to transfer their children to public schools, public school officials must review the homeschoolers' curriculum and other documented work or use appropriate assessments (Williams, 2013). Homeschooling parents/guardians may not consider this option, but they must recognize the importance of maintaining high standards for their children's education; standards that mirror or surpass the traditional methods used in public schools.

Furthermore, there can also be inconsistencies in the data that public and private schools receive about homeschooling. In an older study, public or private school teachers and administrators may base their assumptions of homeschooling with "limited or outdated information" (Olsen, 2008, p. 6). Even though Olsen's (2008) study is about 10 years old, it still offers valuable suggestions that public school officials should examine their public school functions, objectives, and goals to see if they are meeting the desired standards at the public school level. Olsen also posited that if public school officials accepted the challenge of minimizing their limited or outdated information toward homeschooling practices, they may "[become] more responsive and better able to serve the needs of an ever-changing clientele" (p. 7).

One of the challenges facing public schools is the lack of customization of learning resources to meet students' needs (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2013; Urban & Wagoner, 2014). Currently, in public education, there are two broad philosophical views. On one side of the spectrum is the child-centered approach, which supports the works of Dewey and focuses on the students' pursuit of natural interests (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2013; Urban & Wagoner, 2014). The other education philosophy includes the

standardized subject-oriented curricula, which emphasizes the basic educational needs of the students (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2013; Urban & Wagoner, 2014). Events like the launching of Sputnik in the late 1950s and federal aid to education altered the way school officials thought about public education; these events changed from public education of not only meeting the needs of local communities, but also meeting the nation's interests as well (Urban & Wagoner, 2014).

Parents/guardians place primary emphasis in accommodating the interests, talents, and needs of their children (Gaither, 2017). To meet children's educational needs, homeschooling parents/guardians must do the following,

1. Research extensively to find learning materials that will meet state requirements.
2. Solicit advice from veteran homeschoolers about practical ways to homeschool children.
3. Meet the interests and needs of their children (Gaither, 2017).

Few parents/guardians plan to homeschool their children at first, but through chances or opportunities to attend homeschooling conferences or support groups, they begin to consider this option for their children (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). With the different variations of homeschooling that exist, parents/guardians must take into account the needs and interests of their children carefully (Gaither, 2017).

In this study, I explored the challenges that parents/guardians faced when developing their children's learning curricula in the state of Texas. I also list resources that homeschooling parents/guardians used in the planning their children's learning

curricula. The Texas Education Agency (TEA), the guiding force responsible for public education in Texas, specified a limited set of requirements for homeschooling families to follow when developing their homeschooling curriculum (i.e., the curriculum must consist of reading, spelling, language arts, math, and a course in citizenship). Based on the limited guidelines, parents/guardians must decide how to develop their children's individualized learning curricula. The intent of the study was twofold:

1. To solicit homeschooling households as to how they developed their homeschooling-learning curriculum.
2. To explore the prospects of creating a white paper designed to assist homeschooling parents/guardians in the development of their learning curricula.

Through this study, I asked homeschooling participants how they chose, located, and employed their educational resources and materials to meet the limited, less specified guidance from TEA in the development of their homeschooling curricula.

### **Research Questions**

Research question: What motivational factors did parents/guardians use in the development of their children's learning curriculum?

The subresearch questions included the following,

1. What challenges did parents/guardians face in the development of homeschooling curriculum?
2. What learning resources did homeschooling parents/guardians use in the small, rural six-county area of Texas?

3. How do parents/guardians share their learning resources with other homeschooling households?

To complete this study, it was necessary to explore the motivational factors that parents/guardians used when homeschooling their children. The motivational factors assisted homeschool educators in the development of their children's learning curriculum. The motivational factors included ideological reasons, pedagogical reasons, and a proper, safe learning environment (Clark, 2013).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

As a researcher, I addressed the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the research project concerning parents'/guardians' perceptions and methods of homeschooling their children. The section contains specific facts that may have the appearance of being correct, but verifications were lacking. My goal in this section was to understand the potential weaknesses of the study that offered no generalizations on homeschooling families.

#### **Assumptions**

I assumed that homeschooling parents/guardians selected for this study were open and honest in sharing their resources when developing their children's curricula. Other assumptions were, (a) parents/guardians possessed reasons and motives to homeschool their children, (b) homeschooling parents/guardians aligned themselves by homeschooling methods, and (c) mothers were more likely to be the primary teachers of their children. Because the reasons or motives for homeschooling fall between ideological to pedagogical reasons, most THA parents/guardians and their guests aligned

themselves as conservative Christians. I made this assumption based on several observations of family members carrying their Bibles into Friday's homeschooling assemblies at a local church. The homeschooling parents/guardians and their children also cited the pledges to both the U.S. flag and the Christian flag. The older homeschooling students had parts in the opening ceremonies that involved offering prayers or small devotions.

### **Limitations**

Limitations found in any research study are potential weaknesses or concerns that may affect the results or outcomes of the study (Creswell, 2008, 2012). To identify possible limitations in any research study, researchers must exercise lots of patience and practice when using their research skills (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). As a researcher, I was aware of possible criticisms that other scholars may pose when assessing this homeschooling research study. Some of the limitations were (a) small sample size of the proposed population, (b) lack of generalizability when doing a qualitative case study, and (c) possible biases that I possessed toward homeschoolers. Advancing these limitations may assist other researchers to make recommendations or improvements for future homeschooling studies (Creswell, 2008, 2012).

### **Delimitations**

The delimitation of the study enabled me to restrict the number of homeschooling families who resided in a six-county rural area of the state of Texas. It was challenging to locate homeschooling families unless they belonged to a known homeschooling support group. For this study, I used a known homeschooling support group for the qualitative

case study. I placed notices in several public libraries, public buildings, and newspaper advertisements within the six-county area requesting volunteers for the research study.

### **Review of the Literature**

It was important to share how parents'/guardians' approaches and attitudes have changed from generation to generation in the pursuit of their children's education (Gaither, 2017; Murphy, 2012). The U.S. education system can trace its primary roots from the private and religious schools associated with European culture (Gaither, 2017; Pulliam & Van Patten, 2013; Urban & Wagoner, 2014). During the early American colonial period, home education and private religious schools were the dominant ways of educating children (Pulliam & Van Patten, 2013; Urban & Wagoner, 2014). In the 1640s, the Massachusetts General Court passed one of the educational laws requiring parents/guardians to teach their children to read, to revere their faith in God, and to respect the laws of the Commonwealth (Gaither, 2017). Most of the children's learning occurred in private homes (Gaither, 2017). Some local communities regulated specific apprenticeship programs like surveying, metal works, engraving, and large boating skills to ensure that individuals demonstrated the required skills from their apprenticed programs (Gaither, 2017).

During the time of compulsory school and the growth of the industrial revolution, the states' role in public education began to increase while the roles of the parents/guardians decreased (Urban & Wagoner, 2014). The primary objective was to build a standard educational structure designed to produce a robust and well-educated citizenry for the American republic (Gaither, 2017). The change (i.e., the shift from an

agrarian society to an industrial economy) leading to compulsory education, led to a sharp decline in home education (Gaither, 2017).

Since the 1840s, public education had gradually become the dominant way to educate people and children across the United States (Gaither, 2017). However, people's confidence in American public schools began to erode in the 1960s (Gaither, 2017). It was a decade of social unrest (e.g., lack of trust in government, opposing cultural factors, social experimentation for equality, and strong opposition to government policies toward academic and ideological practices in public schools; Gaither, 2017; Murphy, 2012; Ray, 2018). Parents/guardians with strong religious views or other ideological reasons became disillusioned with the way federal and state government restricted their views in local, independent school districts (Murphy, 2012; Pulliam & Van Patten, 2013; Urban & Wagoner, 2014).

Some unresolved issues still exist regarding the separation clause between church and state among noted legal scholars (Bentele, Sager, Soule, & Adler, 2013; Pulliam & Van Patten, 2013). Most scholars (Bentele et al., 2013; Pulliam & Van Patten, 2013) agree that there should be a wall separating the two entities. However, some feel that the wall should be high enough to prohibit federal support of religious establishments, but low enough for the public to accept moral standards and training from the church (Bentele et al., 2013). Conservative homeschoolers and evangelical Christians claimed that the absence of religion in the public schools and other public facilities led to a secular disorder in the United States (Bentele et al., 2013).



Moreover, public school critics also believed that the old system of providing rewards or punishments to encourage children to learn was outdated and adverse to parents'/guardians' perception of their children's educational needs (Gray, 2013). Murphy (2012) also argued that the government lacks "reasonable solutions" to solve social issues and challenges facing public schools (p. 61).

### **Reemergence of Homeschooling**

Murphy (2012) and other scholars (Gaither, 2017; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Smith, 2013) agreed that homeschooling continues to grow even during difficult economic times. Stollar (2015) created a historic homeschooling timeline from 1904 to 2015. Stollar's timeline started when the Indiana Appellate Court in 1904 declared teaching at home was legal. By 1995, homeschooling became legal in every state of the United States of America. Gaither (2017) divided homeschooling into three historical parts: (a) a period of schooling before compulsory attendance laws, (b) schooling during compulsory attendance from various states, and (c) the reemergence of home-based education from dissatisfied parents/guardians for ideological or pedagogical reasons. Kunzman and Gaither (2013) divided homeschooling into two separate areas: (a) continuation of home-based education from the colonial days of American history, and (b) the creation of a new kind of home-based education from the 1970s. The creation of a new kind of home-based education contained either one or both ideological and pedagogical reasons for homeschooling (Gaither, 2017; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2012).

Though most children attended public or private schools in the 20th century, homeschooling, a form of schooling that was almost extinct, came to the surface in the 1970s (Gaither, 2017; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2011). In the mid-1990s, the U.S. Department of Education announced that homeschooling was a growing phenomenon (Ray, 2011). Homeschool advocates (Gaither, 2017; Murphy, 2012; Ray, 2018; Wise-Bauer, 2016; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016) also believed that homeschooling lets families learn together, which allows parents/guardians to build strong, lasting familial relationships with their children.

### **Curriculum Planning**

Homeschooling parents/guardians generally avail themselves to a wealth of educational materials and articles from various homeschooling magazines, support groups, vendors, and numerous educational websites (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). The TEA published a letter dated April 8, 2013 that outlined the requirements to meet the state of Texas' primary educational goals for reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and citizenship. Because of unforeseen events (e.g., death in the family, layoff from work, or the need for specialized training), some homeschooling families may wish to enroll their children in public schools in the state of Texas. Williams (2013), a TEA representative, stated, "Section 28.021 of the TEC requires advancement or credit awarded by the demonstrated proficiency of required subject" (para. 5).

Internet sources may assist homeschooling families in documenting their learning curricula. Some Internet sources may share practical information on how to study and pass the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT); how to record and save relevant documents; and

how to create portfolios, transcripts, and other record-keeping methods required by individual states (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). Knowing these techniques and integrating them into standard practices allowed homeschooling parents/guardians to give more focus to course planning and learning curriculum.

Learning can be a complicated process, and when children are not ready to acquire new learning concepts, they may develop learning disorders when trying to read, write, or do math (Weldon, 2012). Nonetheless, Gardner & Davis (2013), Wise-Bauer (2016), and Wise-Bauer and Wise (2016) believed that children could develop a significant number of learning skills with minimal training from their parents/guardians. Regardless of children's learning potential, parents/guardians must create a learning environment that is accessible to various educational resources to sustain their children's interest in learning (Gardner & Davis, 2013; Wise-Bauer, 2016; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

Sousa (2017) warned that as parents/guardians construct their curricula, they must know the limitation of their children's memory. Sousa (2017) and Doolittle (2013) both agree that working memory is the ability of making sense of what one does (i.e., like driving a car from home to work that requires a considerable amount of attention when backing the car out of the driveway, observing traffic laws, adjusting speed, and watching for pedestrians). At first, driving a car for the first time required a great deal of energy and stress, but over time with practice, driving a car can be accomplished with less stress. Homeschooling parents and guardians must give their children adequate practice time that will enhance their working memory.

Children do possess remarkable capabilities to use symbols and images during their pretending or play periods (Cherry, 2018). As an example, a child in the early stages of preoperational development may use a chair and a paper plate as objects for riding a car (i.e., a chair serves as a seat of a car and the paper plate serves as a steering wheel of a car). Kazemi and Hintz (2014) claimed that children can use their symbol and image skills during their language and math activities, and when combined, served as survival skills for the human race. Holtzman and Susholtz (2011) and Sammons (2013) used everyday objects or hands-on activities to strengthen children's skills in math. In regards to language, Wise-Bauer and Wise (2016) advised parents/guardians to use full, complex sentences when speaking to their children; the children should also respond in kind. Too often parents/guardians correct their children's incomplete sentences by amending their sentences with proper syntax or missing words, and this may cause children and adults to lose their spontaneity or fluid, conversational skills (Wise-Bauer, 2016; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). Parents/guardians should exercise patience by allowing their children to complete their thoughts in full, complete sentences (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). Wise-Bauer (2016) encouraged the use of vocabulary-building skills to help speed up the reading skills.

Furthermore, parents/guardians may think that there are similarities between writing and speaking (Wheeler, 2011). However, writing is not a natural process because it requires "two distinct mental steps" of putting ideas into words and, then, placing those words on paper (para 3). It is important for the students to use their narration skills first before writing their ideas on paper (Wheeler, 2011). Parents/guardians must stress to their

children to complete their sentences in their own words and try not complete their sentences for them (Wheeler, 2011; Wise-Bauer, 2016). Children must see that it is natural to struggle with their writings, and they must also witness the struggles that parents/guardians and teachers must go through when composing notes or letters (Gallaghers, 2011; Wise-Bauer, 2016). Layne (2015) claimed a high connection exists between reading and writing, but educators were not able to align the two subjects effectively. With proper training, reading and writing can enhance children's ability to pursue other subjects, like history, science, and literature, more efficiently.

Wise-Bauer and Wise (2016) also felt that repetition should play an essential role in developing practical skills in grammar, reading, and mathematics throughout their 12 years of education. Wise-Bauer and Wise designed a learning model containing three learning stages to cover 12 years of schooling. The stages include,

1. Grammar stage. A period when students learn the basic mechanics of reading, writing, and arithmetic to retain facts for future studies.
2. Logic stage. A time when students begin to use logic with the facts they obtained from the grammar stage. It is a period of asking "why" questions (e.g., "What powers a car to go forward?" or "What caused the Great Depression?").
3. Rhetoric stage. A period when students apply "force and originality" with their studies (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016, p. 20).

All three stages require an inordinate amount of tedious work on the core subjects of language arts, arithmetic, and reading (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). The next important

process is to integrate the topics into themes or units (Kempton, 2014; Wise-Bauer, 2016; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

Wise-Bauer and Wise (2016) developed a classical model by integrating science into historical events by understanding the concept of our surroundings (Wise-Bauer, 2016). The integration of science and history also adds coherence to the understanding of ourselves as people (Wise-Bauer, 2016). When reviewing the classical model, history divides itself into four broad parts: ancient history, medieval history, late renaissance, and modern history with recommended grades. As an example, the study of ancient history would repeat every 4 years, in Grades 1, 5, and 9; the study of medieval history in Grades 2, 6, and 10; the study of Late Renaissance in Grades 3, 7, and 11; and the study of modern history in Grades 4, 8, and 12.

When constructing a robust curriculum model, one of the challenging tasks for parents/guardians is to develop learning units by combining all of the core subjects like mathematics, reading, grammar, spelling, and music (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). Wise-Bauer and Wise (2016) suggested that parents/guardians should prioritize the core subjects of reading, writing, and math as opposed to the other subjects during the grammar stage of learning. Children will catch up with the other subjects like science and history because they are reading-dependent (Wexler, 2018; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). Additionally, parents/guardians must give careful observations to children who are experiencing reading difficulties.

Healy (2010), Layne (2015), and Wise-Bauer and Wise (2016) agreed that reading is one of the best learning tools that allow children to become independent

learners. Healy advised parents/guardians to limit their children's viewing time with televisions or computers to 2 hours a day or less, and even though children may prefer the passive nature of watching televisions or performing video games, they soon become too docile and less creative. Young children may receive an imbalance in their brain development by absorbing too much visual and motion imagery as opposed to static imagery (Healy, 2010). When an imbalance occurs between motion and static imageries, there are possibilities that children will exhibit difficulties when interposing or interpreting static symbols or words into meaningful expressions (Healy, 2010).

As expressed earlier, under Curriculum Planning on page 19, homeschooling parents/guardians when exposed to multiple sources of educational materials will tend to create effective learning curricula for their children. Overall, when customizing homeschooling curricula, there are three sources to consider: (a) outsourcing education, (b) Internet use, and (c) accountability in learning (Puerling, 2012; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

**Outsourcing education.** One of the strengths of homeschooling is that parents/guardians can outsource specific subjects by hiring tutors who possess extensive knowledge and skills in particular core subject areas, such as advanced mathematics, science, music, sports, or art (Kunzman, 2009; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). For homeschooling families to save money when using tutors or to purchase learning materials, they may need to pool their funds together to hire individuals who possess extensive training (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

**Internet use.** Online learning is becoming an acceptable and shared feature in public, private, and home-based schools (Gaither, 2017). The global Internet can allow people in different parts of the planet to change from industrial-based commerce to knowledge-based acquisitions Puerling (2012). Puerling (2012) and Walters (2015) suggested teachers and parents/guardians immerse themselves into the digital environment that is becoming highly dependent on technology in hopes of preparing their students or children to meet their future academic needs. The pace of new technology is occurring so rapidly that some of the recently produced technology will soon become outdated in a few years or discarded altogether (Puerling, 2012; Walters, 2015). A solution to this dilemma is to make learning a life-long process that will meet these new changes when they occur (Merriam et al., 2007).

Nevertheless, some scholars still suggest that parents/guardians and teachers approach the Internet with caution. Wise-Bauer and Wise (2016) advise parents/guardians to monitor and restrict the use of their home computers with Internet capability. Wise-Bauer and Wise further recommended that parents/guardians should even monitor their children's personal computers or laptops, and not to rely on filters designed to keep out unwanted Internet information.

In regards to the extensive amount of information received from the Internet, it would be beneficial for homeschooling parents/guardians to teach their children how to save, store, and retrieve data from the Internet (Puerling, 2012). The ability to save, store, and retrieve data can be a challenging task, but these skills are essential if family members want to evaluate their data critically, completely, and accurately (Puerling,



2012). Parents and guardians must also show their children what to do when faced with Internet sources that may wish them harm or possess incomplete information (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). In short, digital citizens must exercise proper decisions and common sense when using Internet sources (Waters, 2012).

**Accountability in learning.** Homeschooling households need assurances that they are meeting the educational needs of their children. The lack of accountability was a particular concern of some homeschooling families who found fault with the public-school systems (Gaither, 2017). In several homeschooling research studies, some states will usually use assessment tests to measure students' competencies in various subjects (Urban & Wagoner, 2014).

These assessment tests could include the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Tests (PSAT/NMSQT), SAT, and the American College Test (ACT), which are available for homeschooling students to take at local high schools (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). The College Board for the PSAT/NMAQT and SAT developed a unique code designed to track homeschooling students' test scores (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

Homeschooling families may also want to consider the California Achievement Tests (CAT) and the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). With proper supervision from their parents or guardians, homeschooling students can take these achievement tests at home. When homeschooling students complete the tests, parents or guardians will mail the tests to testing centers to be assessed. These achievement scores along with high school transcripts will contribute substantially to

fulfilling the requirements for those homeschooled students seeking applications to attend colleges, universities, or military services (Gaither, 2017; Wise-Baure, 2016).

In older studies, there were two comprehensive studies (e.g., Ray, 2009; Rudner, 1998), the researchers verified that homeschooling students performed well in most commonly accepted standardized achievement tests (i.e., ACT, CAT, CTBS, or SAT). In an older study, Ray's (2009) findings mirrored Rudner's (1998) study in which homeschooling students scored between 15 to 30 percentile points more than students of public schools with the public-school average at the 50-percentile score. However, one critic (Weiner & Weiner, 1999) of these studies claimed that homeschooling parents/guardians had the choice of allowing their children to participate in these studies. Weiner and Weiner (1999) argued that Rudner's study could not provide an inclusive, overall representation of the homeschooling student population of the time. Rudner used primarily White and Christian subjects for this study. Kunzman and Gaither (2013) opined that although the homeschooling population continues to rise, it remains difficult to achieve representative academic achievement scores of the homeschooling student population.

### **Concrete and Abstract Learning Skills**

Concrete and abstract learning are two distinct ways of learning that usually progress from core competencies or concrete learning methods to higher levels of thinking skills called abstract learning (Hadden & Gear, 2016; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). Kamina and Iyer (2009) suggested that it is possible to bypass concrete learning skills when proceeding to abstract thinking activities, but it is rare. In most learning

cases, parents/guardians may need to consider the use of the see-hear-and-do method (i.e., see the word, hear the word, and copy the word) before their children can learn how to read and write (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). Parents/guardians can also use this method in the following core subjects.

**Mathematics.** To comprehend necessary skills in math, parents/guardians must demonstrate to their children how to convert and integrate their language skills into images and symbols that will help them to solve mathematical problems (Battey, Neal, & Hunsdon, 2018; Holtzman & Susholtz, 2011; Humphreys & Parker, 2015; Sammons, 2013; Weldon, 2010). After the language skills linked with mathematics (e.g.,  $a + b = c$  means “a plus b equals c”), the students can then proceed to high-level math that will include extensive notational skills (Humphreys & Parker, 2015; Sammons, 2013). In the early stages of learning, it is important to use concrete items (e.g., play money to explain the meaning of dollars and cents, measuring cups to measure volumes, building blocks to understand the sequencing of numbers, or rulers to measure distances and fractions) as a way to learn real-life activities (e.g., cooking, shopping, camping, carpentry, or other real-life activities; Kazemi & Hintz, 2014; Sammons, 2013). Another interesting project would be the studying of the longevity of people’s lives. Students can visit a local cemetery to view the death and birth of deceased individuals by gender (Groce et al., 2013).

In mathematics, children should memorize their multiplication tables to enable them to multiply quickly and to divide double-digit numbers effortlessly (Sammons, 2013). Humphreys and Parker (2015) suggested children should refrain from the use of

calculators when seeking mathematical answers. To apply mathematical skills well or to learn the automaticity of numbers, parents/guardians need to find ways to make math real and practical (Humphreys & Parker, 2015; Vorderman, Lewis, Jeffery, Weeks, & McArdle, 2014; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 20016). Vorderman, Lewis, Jeffery, Weeks, and McArdle (2014) suggested that students must practice with numbers regarding addition, subtraction, and multiplication until they are automatic.

Sammons (2013) had strong views toward the term *schema* or prior knowledge that allows students to understand concepts by connecting to things they know. Home-based educators and teachers must draw from what the students know about specific mathematical concepts and try to fit those concepts together to solve mathematical problems or to go the next level of mathematical skills (e.g., algebra, statistics, or calculus; Humphreys & Parker, 2015; Sammons, 2013; Vorderman, Lewis, Jeffery, et al., 2014). New learning skills must have connections, links, or assimilations from previous knowledge (Sammons, 2013). To help build *schemas*, students must demonstrate what knowledge they have before building new skills, and students must understand the connections between their prior experience (Vorderman, Lewis, Jeffery, et al., 2014).

**Language.** Language is an innate quality that allows the toddlers' mind within a few years, barring any accidents or learning disorders, to carry on an intelligent conversation with their parents/guardians without any formal training (Healy, 2012). The goal for parents/guardians is to teach their children to speak fluently in their language with a broad range of expressions (Healy, 2012; Messner, 2015; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). Adequate communication skills should enhance one's ability to listen, to

comprehend words, and to write logically (Messner, 2015). To write a description of an event or to describe something or someone with words will take practice, but this process is worth the time and effort in pursuance of becoming life-long learners (Gallagher, 2011; Messner, 2015). In some cases, young writers should consider substituting or replacing common words with more descriptive words, and as they mature, they should consider changing simple sentences to complex ones (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). In the 21st century world of mass communication, texting, and e-mailing designed to promote instant messages, people may misconstrue those messages as excellent writing and speaking skills (Gambrell, Rowan, & Savard, 2013). Proper grammar is essential, and to achieve the desired communication between people, they must practice those proper grammatical skills daily (Gambrell et al., 2013; Messner, 2015).

**Reading and writing.** Parents/guardians who expressed delight when reading to their children will most likely encourage their children to read with the same intensity (Gallaghers, 2011; Layne, 2015; Weldon, 2012). The previously mentioned scholars also suggested that children who read well will learn to pay close attention to sentence structures of the words within the texts, to pause at the right time while reading to gain the writer's perspectives, and to feel and share the emotions of the different characters in the stories (Hadden & Gear, 2016). Parents/guardians should consider using activities that will make reading and writing fun, such as using crossword puzzles, writing to pen pals or favorite friends, keeping a journal of interesting facts while reading, revising and critiquing through collaboration, or creating a blog or website describing the family vacation (Messner, 2015; Overturf, Montgomery, & Smith, 2013; Weldon, 2010). When

students achieve the skills of identifying or recognizing words (i.e., letters, sounds, words) and processes (decoding), reading fluency and comprehension will increase in other core areas, such as history, literature, math, and science (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

In the upper grades, including middle schools, the strategies for reading change from “mastering the codes of letter sounds” to “the ability to think about” what is read (Hadden & Gear, 2016, p. 10). Hadden and Gear (2016) introduced the importance of using *metacognition skills* when reading in the upper grades. Skills requiring students to use connections, visualizations, questions, inferences, and analysis along with synthesis are essential to make sense of what they are reading. To acquire these *metacognition skills*, teachers and parents/guardians must encourage students to discuss the critical issues about their assigned reading lessons. Through these discussion periods, students begin to develop the language they need to analyze and synthesize their readings (Hadden & Gear, 2016).

**Science, history, and other subjects.** Parents/guardians can use similar approaches by using concrete facts as “building steps” to achieve an understanding of complex concepts in history, science, and other topics (Hadden & Gear, 2016; Kempton, 2014; Weldon, 2010). Wise-Bauer and Wise (2016) believed that parents/guardians should concentrate on their children’s reading skills before proceeding to learn history, science, and other subjects because they are reading-dependent subjects. Parents/guardians must also be consistent and even practice subtle changes by using tacit or metacognitive techniques that will assist their children in the development of their

background or prior knowledge before proceeding to unfamiliar concepts (Hadden & Gear, 2016). Lesh (2011) wanted students to view history as investigators of the past by understanding and using fundamental concepts that lead to particular historical and current events.

### **Implications**

One of the challenges facing homeschooling parents/guardians is choosing the right learning curricula for their children. Gaither (2017) suggested that an effective curriculum should align with the family's reasons for homeschooling. With the vast array of reasons for homeschooling, Bell (2013) and Kunzman and Gaither (2013) agreed that parents/guardians tend to use ideological, pedagogical, or the combination of the two views.

This qualitative study focused on how homeschooling parents/guardians develop their children's learning curriculum. The implications from the study were twofold: (a) to gain perspective on how selected parents/guardians in a six-county area within the state of Texas developed their learning curriculum, and (b) to explore the feasibility of promoting a white paper designed to assist parents/guardians who are new to homeschooling and veterans who feel the need for additional learning resources or ideas. During this study, I witnessed various methods of curriculum construction, planning, and delivery developed from the parent's/guardian's motivational factors, parent's/guardian's education level, and the interests of children.

School district officials may want to review the concerns that homeschooling households may have about public schools (see Olsen, 2008). This assumption does not

mean that all ideas or teaching methods used by homeschoolers are correct, but if those ideas or suggestions do make sense or prove useful, public schools should consider them. Some recommendations may include, (a) allowing homeschooling students to take dual credit classes taught by college professors in the public schools; (b) expanding homeschooling participation in the public schools in the area of sporting events, band contests, science exhibits, or history fairs sponsored by independent school districts; and (c) providing the use of library services, physical fitness centers, and band halls when not used by public school students. The concept of including homeschooling families with specific public-school activities may catalyze to meet the educational needs of all students (Gaither, 2017).

### **Summary**

Some homeschooling scholars (Crabtree, 2015; Weldon, 2010; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016) agreed that parents and guardians of homeschooling children should incorporate reading, math, and language arts into unit studies or themes. Murphy (2012) suggested homeschooling's best strength is the "personalized climate" that parents and guardians can provide to their children that will sustain their learning interests into life-long endeavors (p. 160). The primary interest for this study was to examine the methods and reasons used by homeschooling parents/guardians when developing their children's learning curricula. Some scholars (Bell, 2013; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013) agreed that parents/guardians who have ideological or pedagogical reasons, or both, have some ideas in developing their children's learning curricula. Wise-Bauer and Wise (2016) suggested that homeschooling families should also plan to include lifetime learning skills in their



children's learning curricula. Hanna (2012) claimed pedagogical reasons are more suitable for homeschooling parents/guardians who want their children to excel for academic reasons.

The strategy for the study was to use a qualitative case study designed to gather narrative data through interviews from homeschooling families in live contexts. The next section of the study includes an outline of the following, (a) the description of the research design; (b) the participants involved with the study; (c) the procedures used to procure qualitative data from the study; and (d) the method used to analyze the data. I reviewed and analyzed the data derived from the interviews. Six of the 10 participants came from the THA support group. Four homeschooling parents/guardians were not THA members or associated with other homeschooling support groups. All of the homeschooling families resided in a rural six-county area within the state of Texas.

## Section 2: Methodology

### **Qualitative Research Design and Approach**

In the study, I used the qualitative case study method designed to explore the views of individuals who identified themselves as homeschool learning curriculum developers “over a sustained period” (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). A growing amount of research on the topic of homeschooling exists, but there are still challenges in conducting future homeschooling research (Ray, 2010, 2018). Kunzman (2009) cited the following problems, (a) homeschoolers are difficult to locate unless they identified themselves as homeschoolers, (b) some homeschoolers may not wish to participate in research studies, and (c) some parents/guardians do not trust what researchers may reveal about homeschoolers.

With the challenges listed by Kunzman (2009), I was able to identify at least 10 homeschooling parents who shared their stories as homeschool learning curriculum developers. My objective was to list the factors used by the interviewed participants when developing their homeschooling learning curricula. This study incorporated those factors into tables. In this section, I also identify some of the participants’ comments associated with the factors in the table formats. Because the state of Texas does not require notifications from the parents/guardians to homeschool their children, the task of locating homeschooling families was challenging. Six of the 10 participants were THA members; however, to interview at least 10 participants, I used the snowballing technique to seek additional referrals from THA members who participated in the interviews (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Three of the referrals came from the snowballing

technique when interviewing two of the THA members. I also used advertising notices at various public places within the rural, six-county area in the state of Texas, to solicit homeschooling parents/guardians who may want to participate in the research study. I also put an advertisement notice in a weekly newspaper. One of the 10 participants responded to a newspaper advertisement.

In this research project, I explored the motives, reasons, and methods used by homeschooling parents/guardians in developing their children's curricula. The objective of the qualitative research was to construct and create understanding and meaning of how parents/guardians "make sense of [their] experiences" as homeschooling curriculum developers (see Merriam, 2009, p. 13).

Several kinds of qualitative research approaches (i.e., case study, ethnographic study, grounded study, narrative analysis, and phenomenological study) were considered for this study, but I decided to use the case study method (see Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). I considered the case study method for the following reasons, (a) to "focus on small numbers of individuals within a group, and (b) to document the group's or individual's experiences in a particular setting" (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 15). For this study, I did not consider the grounded theory approach because this method focuses on building plans based on the qualitative data received from a particular study (see Lodico et al., 2010). It was not my intention to create theories but only to provide specific experiences that homeschooling parents/guardians had when developing learning curricula for their children. The other approaches (ethnographic study, narrative analysis,

and phenomenological study) provided more in-depth perspectives of the subjects (Lodico et al., 2010).

An ethnographic study provides the cultural interactions that may exist between the subjects within a large society, while a phenomenological study involves the bracketing or setting aside of prior beliefs or the phenomenon of interests temporarily to understand the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). I used the ethnographic study approach because it focuses on the practices of a subgroup, but not its relations to a more extensive society. The narrative analysis approach involves stories of particular individuals or events interpreted by researchers by probing the beginning, the middle, and the end of the stories to view how the events matured or changed over time (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell, 2008; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

The qualitative case study researcher aims to provide the reader of being there by using rich descriptions of the phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). My intent was “to discover meaning, to investigate processes, and to gain insight” of individuals who were homeschooling subjects (see Lodico et al., 2010, p. 269). For the case study to be useful, it must be bounded or focused in single units (Lodico et al., 2010). Bounded study or single units mean that the researcher limited the number of interviewed people or the amount of time for observations (Creswell, 2009; Lodico et al., 2010).

The rationale for considering the qualitative case study approach is to examine a purposeful sample or the *particularistic* of a phenomenon that is accessible to the researcher (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). To adequately test the study, I used rich,

descriptive narratives of homeschoolers who developed their children's learning curriculum (Barbour, 2014; Lodico et al., 2010; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016).

Creswell (2008) defined case study as, "an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection" (p. 476). With this definition in mind, I used the case study to examine possible factors or motives that parents/guardians use when developing their children's learning curricula. To obtain broader understanding from the homeschooling families, I considered the "multiple case study" as recommended by Creswell (2008, p. 477).

To do a multiple case study, a researcher must do the following, (a) consider the use of natural settings of the homeschooling families; (b) gather data from the natural settings; and (c) focus on more in-depth, emergent themes (Creswell, 2009). In this project, I intended to explore and provide more in-depth explanations of the possible motives used by homeschooling parents/guardians when developing their children's learning curricula.

### **Participants**

The participants for the interviews were full-time homeschooling parents. There were no guardians. Some of the participants took their children out of public schools for various reasons. The reasons for leaving public schools ranged from dissatisfaction with teaching methods used in public schools, to lack of safety issues, to the lack of individual needs of their children. Based on observations and statements made by the participants, they were furiously active individuals who wanted to educate their children to become

independent learners with a strong sense of individuality in a healthy, safe environment (see Gaither, 2017).

### **Criteria for Selecting Participants**

One of the challenges of narrative analysis is the selection of individuals who wish to be a part of the interview process, and in some cases, the researcher wants to focus on people or events that are atypical of the group (Creswell, 2008). The other challenge is to find individuals who are willing to tell their stories that are worth the interest of researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell, 2008; Glesne, 2011). The criteria for selecting the participants for this project were as follows, (a) the participants were homeschooling parents, and (b) the participants were willing to share their stories as homeschooling participants. Most of the participants, except one, came from a rural setting. The exception came from a city with an approximate population of 4,500 people.

Nine of the 10 participants were White. All of the participants and their spouses had high school diplomas, two had associate degrees, five had college degrees, and one had a master's degree. In years of homeschooling experiences, five of the participants had 12 or more years. The remaining five participants had between 2 and 8 years of homeschooling experiences.

Initially, the primary goal was to reach a minimum of 10 participants for the study, and it took approximately 16 weeks to achieve the minimal number. My goal was to interview participants with different demographic backgrounds, but I did not achieve that goal. All 10 participants chose ideological reasons for homeschooling. In this case,

they wanted their children to participate in biblical training as part of their educational background.

### **Justification for Number of Participants**

To best understand the methods that homeschooling parents/guardians used as curriculum developers, it was necessary to achieve a depth of understanding from the parents/guardians themselves. It was necessary to provide sufficient opportunity to delve deeper into the parents'/guardians' experiences rather than to try and speak superficially with a large number of parents/guardians (see Glesne, 2011). The difficulties of finding willing participants were also factors in determining the number of participants. The Home School Legal Defense Association (2015) advised parents/guardians not to participate in homeschooling studies because of uncertain agendas from the researchers, and some of the participants did not want to reveal their status as homeschooling parents/guardians (see Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2012).

Based on these limiting factors, I felt that if 10 participants were part of the study, it would be a significant start to uncovering more about this topic. Six of the 10 participants came from a small homeschooling support group. Three participants came from referrals made by two members of the support group, and the remaining participant responded to a newspaper advertisement. Even though the sample was small, the participants were able to reveal their practices as homeschooling curriculum developers. The small sample provided in-depth findings from the participants as homeschooling curriculum developers. All 10 participants shared similar information and reasons for

homeschooling their children, and with an increased time frame for me to seek additional participants, the results would most likely remain the same.

### **Methods for Establishing a Researcher-Participant Relationship**

To develop a positive researcher-participant relationship, researchers should express their views that may affect the interaction with the interviews (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). I used a nonjudgmental stance when interviewing the participants (see Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). The participants' views were respected and kept confidential during and after the data collection process. Furthermore, Barbour (2014) and Yin (2014) both suggested that the narratives from the interviews should flow like guided conversations rather than from a rigid set of queries. The interviews also provided opportunities for parents/guardians to describe in their words the methods and motives used when developing their children's learning curricula.

### **Protection of the Participants' Rights**

Before collecting any data or narratives from the interviews, it was essential for the project to receive approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Walden University (see Appendix A). Each participant of the study received a copy of the Informed Consent Form outlining the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study. The consent form also assured protecting the confidentiality of the participants throughout the study. For this study, no incentives were given to attract potential interviewees. Each participant volunteered, and there was no risk or harm to the participants. To minimize potential risk or harm, the participants of the study could withdraw at any time during the project. There were no withdrawals from the study. After



the participants acknowledged their understanding of the consent form and chose to be a part of the research project, they signed and dated the consent forms of the protocol. The protocol also contained the names of individuals to contact if there were questions or concerns regarding the project.

### **Data Collection**

Most literary research studies on the subject of homeschooling included historical aspects of the movement and the study of individuals who were homeschoolers (Gaither, 2017). For this study, I restricted the study to the collection and analysis of the curricula development from 10 participants who live within a six-county radius of a rural area located in the state of Texas. Through this restriction, I was able to use deep, thick, descriptions of the participants, as recommended by Barbour (2014), Merriam and Tisday (2016), and Yin (2014). When using semistructured interview questions, I was able to identify methods, procedures, and sources adopted by homeschoolers when developing their children's learning curricula. In regards to the natural settings of the homes, detailed descriptions of the environment were collected to evaluate the similarities and differences between different homeschooling families (Barbour, 2014; Yin, 2014).

Except for two interviews, all of the interviewed participants were mothers. I interviewed two of the participants in a public library; six of the interviews took place in the participants' homes; and the remaining two participants were interviewed at their church. I used a digital voice recorder for six of the 10 interviews. The other four participants requested advanced copies of the interview questions so they could write down their answers without a face-to-face interview. After each personal interview, I

used a word processor to transcribe the narratives followed with observations and recollections of significant points of the interviews from a field journal. The four mothers who wanted the advanced interview questions made their answers available to me by electronic mail.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Glesne (2011) suggested that qualitative research studies require three sources of data to achieve a deeper understanding of the phenomenon: observations, interviews, and documents. For observational purposes, I used field notes to record the locations, settings, and descriptions of the events. In the area of document collections, I relied on sources that elicited understanding of the topic (Barbour, 2014; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). The documents included previous research studies and published books about homeschooling or curriculum development. I gathered and recorded the research findings through the use a journal, digital voice recorder, electronic mail, and word processor. The collection methods also ensured sufficiency of data collection from the research questions when combining observations, interviews, and cited documents from previously published books and research studies.

The primary objective of the study was for parents/guardians to share their challenges when developing their homeschooling curricula through detailed descriptions. The study involved use of the qualitative case method design to explore the personal perspectives of individuals who identified themselves as homeschoolers who could provide detailed information about their homeschooling experiences as curriculum developers. The adopted case study method was the most robust qualitative approach for

the research study because researchers employ the dynamics of “focus[ing] on small groups or individuals within an organization; and to document the group or individual experiences in a specific setting” (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 15). The data collected from the study represents the parents’/guardians’ points of view without prejudice or bias in clear, conversational data that researchers can draw upon to develop an understanding of each homeschool environment (see Yin, 2014).

### **Interviews**

I explored the challenges that parents/guardians faced in the development of their children’s learning curriculum; how they experienced the challenges; and what resources they used for the development of the learning curriculum. When interviewing the participants, I used Glesne’s (2011) suggestions that researchers must consider the amount of time needed to spend with each of the participants. The amount of time used for each of the participants varied depending on their personalities, acceptances, and willingness to participate in the study (Glesne, 2011). The interviews ranged from 12 to 47 minutes, with an average time of 29 minutes. Some of the participants needed additional time when trying to express their experiences as curriculum developers. Furthermore, refraining from the enforcement of a specific timetable increased the participants’ likelihood of providing rich conversation and detail (see Glesne, 2011).

### **Justifications for the Interview Method**

Interviews are essential when researchers need to observe the findings, verbal expressions, and reasons from the participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Glesne, 2011; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Interviews, especially with open-ended questions,

allowed the homeschooling participants to respond freely about their feelings toward homeschooling their children (see Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Even though qualitative data collection was labor intensive, the process yielded profound, rich descriptions and accounts from the participants. The process also gave me opportunities to ask depth-probing questions that provided additional understanding of the paradigm (Glesne, 2011; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). I used known homeschoolers for the interviews because the state of Texas does not require notifications from parents/guardians who wish to homeschool their children. Based on the literature review, most homeschooling studies are anecdotal narratives (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2012).

### **Procedure for Gaining Access to Participants**

The methods of gaining access to participants involved: (a) putting notices (see Appendix B) in public libraries about the proposed project; (b) placing an advertisement (see Appendix B) in a local, weekly newspaper; (c) visiting a homeschooling support organization; and (d) requesting interviewees to provide referrals of individuals who may want to participate in the research project. During the research, I was able to identify a particular homeschooling group. The group identified themselves as THA members, a pseudonym, containing several homeschooling families. From this support group, I sought permissions to interview parents/guardians who homeschool their children. In some of the interviews, attempting to procure access to participants took time because of scheduling conflicts (Glesne, 2011).

## **Role of the Researcher**

I previously taught as a public-school teacher. I retired in 2013, but still have a keen interest in learning about homeschooling families. As a former teacher, I became intrigued with two homeschooling families who were members of my church in a small community in central Texas. The homeschooling children were active in Bible drills, and they knew all the books in the Holy Bible. The parents/guardians and their children were devout Christians. As a member of the church, I conducted the Bible drill contests, and the homeschooling children were some of the contestants. These children performed well. Based on this limited experience, I wanted to learn more about homeschooling and asked the following questions,

1. How did parents/guardians motivate their children to do well consistently in Bible drill contests?
2. What were the children's learning curricula?
3. What learning resources did the parents/guardians use?
4. How much time did the parent use in educating their children?

With these questions in mind, I was invited to attend one of their planning sessions. I was fascinated in how the planning session began. Each mother (there were no fathers) presented reports of upcoming events and activities that may interest the children.

In one of the meetings, I was introduced by a THA member. I told the mothers that I was deeply impressed with the homeschooling children who attended the church, and I wanted to know more about the homeschooling support group. I asked if they would assist in doing a study on homeschooling. There were mixed reviews, but some of

the families were supportive. Some of the homeschooling members shared some concerns that the study may produce negative reviews about their methods and reasons for homeschooling. In short, there was some mistrust, and I respected their concerns. The task was to work with those families who were willing to participate in the study.

### **Data Analysis**

In the attempt to generate, gather, and record data for this study, Yin (2014) suggested qualitative researchers follow the list of questions as prescribed in the study protocol. If the responses warrant additional clarification, then the researcher should use rephrased questions in an unbiased manner that coincide with the original questions from the protocol (Yin, 2014). The respondents to the questions should feel free to address their motives, beliefs, concerns, and needs (Glesne, 2011). Yin further suggested that most case studies should “resemble guided conversation rather than structured queries” (p. 110). Yin also added that narrative data from adults can provide reasons for their experiences when developed into individual stories. The intent of this research project was to relate each interview as a story. One of the intents was to reveal how parents/guardians may think about their homeschooling experiences in their own words and compare those experiences with other scholarly findings (see Yin, 2014).

When conducting data analysis, the objective was to review the steps or reasons why families chose to homeschool their children. Glesne (2011) described this experience as “[making] sense of what you have experienced” (p. 184). In the study, I used the thematic approach when analyzing patterns, similarities, or discrepancies that existed in the interviews. A researcher should analyze each case in the following terms: family,

events, settings, and word use (Glesne, 2011). After reviewing several cases, I made comparisons between families in regards to settings, events, and word use. One of the challenges faced with this study was looking for subtle or extreme differences between homeschooling families. The families shared similar views and methods toward homeschooling.

### **Evidence of Quality and Procedures**

Though the questions were open-ended, the participants had adequate time to express themselves in their own words. With this in mind, I used written transcripts, a voice recorder, field notes, journals, homeschooling studies, and research textbooks by Barbour (2014), Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), and Yin (2014). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) explained qualitative data collection is a rigorous process, and the process should consider the following steps (p. 173):

1. Locate sites for the study.
2. Identify the participants.
3. Determine sample size.
4. Consider purposeful sample.
5. Determine recruiting strategies for the participants.
6. Develop a qualitative protocol for collecting the data.
7. Obtain institutional review board approval to begin the study.
8. Develop an instrument to collect the data.
9. Determine how to use the collected data.

During this process, I designed the interview questions into seven different categories, and two individuals reviewed the interview questions for clarity. The individuals included a speech pathologist with a Master of Science degree and a graduate student with an emphasis in psychology. These individuals were able to provide suggestions to ensure that each of the questions were worded to objectively collect the required data and allowed increased participation between the subjects and me (e.g., to increase the propensity of exchange between participant and researcher).

During the data collection phase, I analyzed the participants' narratives during the spring and summer months of 2015. During this period, I observed patterns, similarities, and possible anomalies expressed by the participants as homeschool curriculum developers. Qualitative case studies should allow for intensified, holistic explanations and examination of the individual cases (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Researcher should save information collected to have the ability to retrieve needed information by using interview logs, transcripts, field notes, and reflective journals (Barbour, 2014; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). The save and retrieve method, as recommended by Merriam and Tisdale (2016), allows researchers to edit information, identify patterns, reduce redundancies, and fit themes or parts together. When looking for themes or patterns, it was essential to note the occurrences and frequencies of those events (Barbour, 2014; Yin, 2014).

To further enhance the quality and procedures of this study, I encouraged the participants to review their assigned transcripts from their interviews for accuracy, clarification, or to give opportunities to make additional comments from the interviews. I also compared the findings from other documented sources written by homeschooling



scholars (i.e., Martin-Chang, Gould, & Meuse, 2011; Hanna, 2012; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2012; Pannone, 2014; Ray, 2018; Weldon, 2010, 2012; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016).

### **Procedures for Dealing With Discrepant Cases**

In the event of discrepancies between the participants, the researcher should consider this as a confirmation that the data are accurate (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Creswell and Plano Clark further explained, “in real life, we expect the evidence for themes to diverge and include more than just positive information” (p. 212). The question should be, “How are discrepancies considered?” One of the steps to consider was to have the participants review their assigned transcripts for editing purposes and clarification. If there were irregular or unusual comments, I asked for clarifications. The second step was to review possible literature or qualitative research textbooks when incorporating irregular or unusual comments. Throughout this study, I wanted to maintain high ethical standards of reporting all of the findings. The study includes the discrepancies with plausible explanations.

### **Coding Procedures**

Developing a coding system played a significant role when gathering data from individual transcripts. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) suggested that when creating codes, qualitative researchers should use a “provisional ‘start list’ of codes” before generating data (p. 81). The start list for this study included:

1. Years of experience = YE
2. Reasons to homeschool = RH

3. Levels of education= LE
4. Number of children = NC
5. Primary teacher = PT
6. Parental roles = PR
7. Factors for homeschooling = FH
8. Academic reasons = AR

Some of the codes from the start list developed into other codes. As an example, code PT (Primary teacher) changed to MT (Mother as teacher) because all of the female participants claimed that they were the primary teacher. The two male participants agreed that their wives were the primary teachers.

Table 1 depicts the educational levels generated from the code level of education (LE), and Table 2 lists years of experience (YE) and the number of children (NC) from the participants. Most of the codes from the start list generated these tables. Table 1

*Levels of Education*

Father	Levels of education	Mother
4	High school diploma	7
1	Some college	0
2	Associate degree	0
3	College degree	2
0	Master degree	1

Table 2

*Years of Homeschooling Experiences and Family Size*

Family numeric ID	Years of experience	Number of children
1	16	5
2	8	2
3	7	3
4	2	2
5	17	3
6	7	4
7	6	1
8	21	3
9	15	3
10	12	4
	AVG: 11.1	AVG: 3.0

Data were gathered using an interview instrument I designed to produce the needed information represented in Tables 1 and 2. By using a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), in this case, MAXQDA, I was able to gather frequently used words from the interviewed transcripts. Table 3 contains the frequently used words from the transcripts.

Table 3

*Word Frequency*

Word	Length	Count	Stemmed words
Family	6	471	families, family
Homeschooling	13	386	homeschool, homeschooled, homeschooler, homeschoolers, homeschooling
Children	8	354	children
Learning	8	166	learn, learned, learning, learns
School	6	118	school, schooling, schools
Group	5	116	group, groups
Support	7	111	support, supporter, supportive, supports
Teach	5	82	teach, teaches, teaching, teachings
Reads	5	78	read, reading, reads
Planning	8	74	plan, planned, planning, plans
Curriculum	10	69	curriculum, curriculums

Once I was familiar with the data from each of the interviews, I began to break up the data into individual meaningful units. I then gave each of those units a new, individual code that described the unit. Table 4 contains some samples of the original codes.

Table 4

*Coding*

Code	Unit of meaning
Mother is teacher	I am the primary teacher of my children, I am the primary teacher,
Husband helps teach	Husband will assist me in areas that he is familiar My husband is right behind me.
Homeschooling tradition	[My husband] came from a homeschooling family, and I thought we should continue the tradition.
Teach the three Rs	Penmanship is stressed The basic courses like English, literature, math, and history. Math, I want them to memorize the tables.
Community supports for homeschooling	Supportive community, most families are homeschooling their children. Association provides educational opportunities
Field trips	Homeschooling group attended the George Bush Museum We planned field trips to attend different events in Austin and surrounding area.
Bible is the reason	We chose to homeschool for biblical reasons. We can give a much better education to include our Christian beliefs

After completing the coding process, I had 109 codes. I then went through all of the codes and combined those codes that were similar. As an example, public school violence and safe schools became one code SE, meaning safe environment. Based on this procedure, I was able to group the narratives into meaningful clusters (see Barbour, 2014). Table 5 presents the clusters of significant statements from the transcripts.

I organized each interview by date and by numeric code to protect participants' identities and opinions and to preserve their perspectives within the homeschooling communities. After each interview, I downloaded the transcription to MAXQDA. There are other CAQDAS programs (e.g., ATLAS.ti, NVivo, and QDA Miner), but I chose MAXQDA for its reasonable price with no annual fee, and because the program was compatible with the computer operating system.

Table 5

*Significant Statements/Clusters*

Cluster	Code	Cluster	Code
Years of experience	YE	Ideological reasons	IR
Pedagogical reasons	PR	Social factors	SF
Curriculum resources	CR	Importance of family	IP
Biblical training	BT	Family routine	FR
Family roles	FR	Number of children	NC
Level of education	LE	Family participation	FP
Support group	SP	Mother as teacher	MT
Safe environment	SE	Family time	FT
Special needs	SN	Family custom	FC
Peer factors	PF	Escape violence	EV
Parental roles	PR	Academic success	AS
Children's needs	CN	Learn fundamentals	LF
Autonomous reasons	AR	Extrinsic motivation	EM
Intrinsic motivation	IM	Homeschooling tradition	HT
Community support	CS	Field events (Trips)	FE
Husband support	HS	Core subjects	CS

I viewed and assessed the responses of 10 homeschooling participants by coding the different dimensions of their homeschooling realities from the interviewed participants (Glesne, 2011). The transcription of the data shared how the participants developed their learning curricula in real life contexts. I tracked the interviews through the use of interview logs and field notes, which focused on themes, structure, and similarities between the separate homeschooling households. One noticeable feature discovered from the project was that most of the participants had 6 or more years of homeschooling experience. The one exception had 2 years of homeschooling experience. Another noticeable feature was that mothers were the primary teachers of their children.

### **Instrumentation for the Study**

Appendix C of the study contains the instrumentation for the qualitative case study. I divided the interview guide into seven parts with two or more questions assigned for each part. The parts or categories of the interview were demographic information, introduction to homeschooling, experiences in homeschooling, resources and materials used for homeschooling, children's participation, support groups, and educational levels of the participants. The questions were crafted to receive information from the participants regarding their experiences as homeschoolers in seven different categories of the interview. Participants were asked additional questions when clarifications were needed. The goal of the qualitative project was to achieve an understanding of why parents/guardians chose to homeschool and what methods they used in planning their children's learning curriculum.



The key to understanding and verifying a qualitative research study is to perform triangulation of several data sources (Barbour, 2014; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell, 2009). To achieve successful triangulation with the subjects and sources, I reviewed the transcripts with the field notes on the participants and their physical surroundings, and compared the findings to those made by other homeschooling scholars (Jones, 2013; Olsen, 2008; Pannone, 2014). In the study, some differences existed within the targeted population, which enabled me to collect a diverse pool of participants. Some of the differences were, one participant of the study was new to homeschooling, some had several years of homeschooling experiences, and some have pursued homeschooling through the graduations of their children. Some of the homeschooling participants used different methods when planning their children's learning curricula.

### **Data Analysis Results**

The study had three assumptions. Those assumptions were, (a) parents/guardians possessed reasons to homeschool their children; (b) homeschooling parents/guardians aligned themselves by homeschooling methods; and (c) mothers, in most cases, were the primary teachers of their children (Gaither, 2017; Kunzan & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2011). With these assumptions, I created the interview questions in the following categories: demographic information, introduction to homeschooling, experiences in homeschooling, utilization of homeschooling resources and materials, children's participation in homeschooling activities, the importance of homeschooling support groups, and the educational level of the participants.

The prominent or salient codes produced the five general themes, as depicted in Table 6. Two (Real and practical curriculum and Family is the center) of the five general themes had associated subthemes (see Table 7). All of the interviewed participants expressed both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors for homeschooling. The intrinsic motivations included, (a) family time, (b) commitment to family, (c) passing family values, (d) good behavior, (e) instructions fitting the child, (f) mother as the teacher, and (g) biblical training. I truncated these intrinsic values into three general themes: (a) Real and practical curriculum, (b) The Bible is the foundation, and (c) Family is the center. The extrinsic factors were family protection and dealing with social issues. With these extrinsic factors, I placed them in the general themes of Socialization runs through parents and the need for a Safe learning environment. In the study, the participants appeared unanimous in both intrinsic and extrinsic factors toward homeschooling. As examples, all of the participants shared a likeness in the following areas:

1. The mothers were the primary teachers;
2. They expressed a desire for a safe learning environment for their children;
3. The families expressed a need for biblical training;
4. Their children exhibited positive social traits; and
5. They want to develop Real and practical curricula for their children.

During this study, I detected no discrepancies in the participants' views toward homeschooling. The differences came from the participants' methods of teaching. They

aligned themselves in one of the following, classic approach, unit studies approach, and the traditional approach.

Table 6

*Codes to Assigned Themes*

Codes	Themes
Pedagogical reasons (PR) Core subjects (CS) Children's needs (CN) Special needs (SN) Academic success (AS) Autonomous reasons (AR)	Real and practical curriculum
Family roles (FR) Parental roles (PR) Family time (FT) Importance of family (IP) Homeschooling tradition (HT) Husband support (HS)	Family is the center
Escape violence (EV) Safe environment (SE) Extrinsic motivation (EM)	Safe learning environment
Biblical training (BT) Ideological reasons (IR)	The Bible is the foundation
Field trips (FE) Peer factors (PF) Social factors (SF)	Socialization runs through parents

Table 7

*Themes*

General themes	Subthemes
Real and practical curriculum	Planning of the day Instructions fits the child
Family is the center	Time with family Passing on values Good behavior Commitment to family Mother as teacher
Safe learning environment	
The Bible is the foundation	
Socialization runs through parents	

**Demographic Information**

The sample consisted of 10 families represented by either a father or mother who resided within a six-county area in central Texas, and all of the participants homeschooled their children. Four of the six THA families attended the same church. Two of the six THA families attended different churches. Four of the 10 families were not members of a homeschooling group. Nine of the families were Caucasians, and one was Hispanic. Each family had both a father and a mother. It was primarily the mothers (eight of 10 families) who participated in the interviews. Two fathers took part in the interviews without their spouses. All of the families stressed Christian value, and all of the interviewed participants shared the thoughts of imparting esteemed values to their children (see Murphy, 2012).

In older studies (Gladin, 1987; McGraw, Bergen, & Schumm, 1993), homeschooling parents/guardians were more likely to have college degrees than those who send their children to public schools. Ray (2010) found 62.5% of mothers had college degrees; whereas, it was 66.3% for fathers. As presented in Table 1, only six of the 20 parents in the study had college degrees or higher, which translate to 30% with college degrees in this sample.

### **Data Interpretation**

Following the research question and subquestions, I embedded the guiding questions within the interviews. Most of the interview questions were geared to explore what teaching resources and motivational factors that selected participants used in the development of their children's learning curricula in a small, adjacent rural community located in central Texas. The primary research question was, what motivational factors did parents/guardians use in the development of their children's learning curriculum? The subresearch questions were,

1. What challenges did parents/guardians face in the development of homeschooling curricula?
2. What learning resources did homeschooling parents/guardians use in a small, rural six-county area of the state of Texas?
3. How do parents/guardians share their educational resources with other homeschooling households?

The data results were derived from a linear approach recommended by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) and Yin (2014). I organized the data from written narratives of the

interviews (e.g., transcripts, field notes, and reflective journals) into meaningful units.

Each meaningful unit received an assigned code.

To ensure the accuracy of the general themes with associated themes, I referred to the field notes (see Appendix D) and the transcripts. I also reviewed subthemes. The themes outlined in this study support findings by other homeschooling scholars, including Murphy (2012), Olsen (2008), Pannone (2014), Ray (2010), Seago (2012), Walters (2015), and Weldon (2010). All participants in the study shared stories about the changes they made as homeschoolers. As the participants gained experiences and knowledge as homeschooling parents, they made modifications on how to present their children's lessons. All of the participants expressed the need for a safe learning environment for their children.

The goal of this qualitative project was to achieve an understanding of why the homeschooling participants chose to homeschool and what methods they used when planning their children's learning curriculum. The key to understanding and verifying this qualitative project was the triangulation of several data sources (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2014). As previously discussed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), it is possible that exceptions or differences within a sampled population may occur when triangulated with different sources. I noted and reviewed the exceptions with the participants for clarifications as to why they occurred.

**Research Question 1: Motivational factors.** The guiding research question for this study was, what motivational factors did parents/guardians use in the development of

their children's learning curriculum? I was able to answer this research question by using the following themes, Real and practical curricula and Family is the center.

***Real and practical curricula.*** All of the interviewed participants were in agreement that their children's learning curricula should be real and practical. They believed that the curriculum should also reflect their personal beliefs. Subthemes were planning the day and instruction fits the child. All of the interviewed participants followed similar schedules, and most of the academic learning took place in the morning hours. Many of the interviewed participants pieced their learning material together by using the co-op recommendations, from bookstores, through other parents/guardians, or by purchasing books from vendors or at garage sales. Almost none of the families employed any prepackaged curriculum. Many families reported using limited to no Internet resources. Family 10's participant said, "Only at the city library will I allow my children to go online. I do not use online services when developing my children's curriculum. I want them to read from books. Very few mistakes made from well-published books." The other families who reported little to no Internet use agreed with Family 10.

All of the interviewed participants shared that their children should possess strong, necessary skills in grammar, writing, reading, and mathematics. Also, several families taught penmanship. They felt that penmanship was an essential skill that is often overlooked in education. All of the families expressed interests in having some decisions in the development of their children's learning curricula that reflect their values and

beliefs. Family 8's participant stated, "[God] wanted them to know who made them and how the earth was formed, and not have all that replaced by evolution."

Family 6's participant relied primarily on the *McGuffey's Readers*. Family 6's participant felt, "the late McGuffey represented the kind of education that his children should receive." McGuffey's style of writing impressed the Family 6's participant through a series of lesson plans with selected spelling words, dictionary work, and phonics after every story. Family 6's participant also used books authored by Wise-Bauer, especially in the subjects of writing and composition. Family 8's participant used the Distinguished Achievement Program from the Texas State Board of Education that provided dual credits from colleges and high schools for completed work (TEA, n.d.). A student must earn 26 and one-half credits to qualify for the Distinguished Achievement Program (TEA, n.d.).

Most of the interviewed participants (Families 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, and 10) have purchased educational programs at least one time in their homeschooling experiences. One of the most significant issues was the price of these learning programs, as they tend to be expensive. Family 3's and Family 6's participants expressed the interest of making their curriculum real and practical. One of the interviewed participants (Family 3) reported,

We have some show animals, and the children were responsible for maintaining journals on the caring and feeding of the show animals. We used weights and measures to figure out the sizes of the animals. The kids have figured out that the animals change over time. We also introduce science at this time. With science,



the kids learned where the vital organs are inside their farm animals. We apply what we learned with real-world concepts. I guess this is the reason why I like the unit-study projects of applying the different subjects to particular units like animal husbandry to mending and repairing fences on our property.

Family 6's participant reported something similar. Their children were interested in computer science and music, and the homeschooling participants tailored their children's learning curricula to those interests.

***Planning the day.*** Many similarities existed in how and when families schedule their days. Family 4's participant described a typical day for several families:

We begin our day by getting our personal chores done. You cannot do anything right until everything is put away. We do not need distractions when we start our lessons. We make sure our restroom duties are taken care of first. You would be surprised how this thing [restroom] interrupts morning schedules. The family Bible is read. I usually read to them, but when they get older, I expect them to read the Bible. We do penmanship by printing our letters [with lined paper]. [When it comes to] reading, I picked most of the books to read from the local library in [REDACTED]. The library has wide selections of books for young people to read. After reading, we do grammar. I have purchased several used textbooks from a local garage sale. Matter of fact, the lady I bought these textbooks from was a retired schoolteacher. We spend about 30- to 40-minutes a day for each subject. I do assign homework with our seven-year-old son, and this is where his father comes in when he comes home from work. Occasionally, my husband

would say, “I see that your mother has been teaching you something.” I just chuckle when I hear that from him. I guess he thinks that I am pushing him in with this homeschooling thing.

With some variation in order, this was the schedule that most of the interviewed families followed. By having routines, the families were able to focus on learning without distractions.

*Instruction fits the child.* Another subtheme was making sure that the instructions were meeting the needs of the child. Several of the interviewed families reported that homeschooling enabled them to use different learning styles and methods that would assist their children, and in some cases, children with learning difficulties, which they felt were lacking in the public schools. Family 9’s participant spoke about the differences in learning styles she had observed with her children,

We started with having school at home. I taught the traditional 3-Rs to our sons, but I noticed individual differences with our sons. The oldest wanted very much to be like his dad. The other two had their interests. They love putting things together. They fixed old pocket watches, collected old coins, and draw things. With their different interests, we do begin each day with prayer, Bible reading, and then we do light house chores. We do it in this order; Jesus first, and then we do our chores.

Although most of the families’ children did their core classes of reading, grammar, and math in the morning hours, the families were able to differentiate and follow personal

interests of the children in their afternoon schedules. Family 6's participant spoke in detail about the learning differences of their children:

Yes, our children have different interests, and what works for one child may not work with another child. We worked with other families, and we have shared ideas that may help our children. What we have found out is that every child has different interests or needs, and we look at their strengths; we incorporate different learning styles that may assist our child in their learning. Not every method works for every child.

Homeschooling enabled the families to observe and analyze how each child learns best. The participants were able to take this knowledge to design a curriculum that fit each of their children's needs. Family 4's participant spoke about some of the challenges she faced with her son by stating,

We considered homeschooling with our oldest son [because he] was experiencing learning problems at school, and we felt he needed more attention. We can do this at home, and he seems to like it. When our daughter came around, we decided to stay with homeschooling.

For Family 4, it was the primary reason (instructions to fit the child) to homeschool their son because of the son's learning difficulties in public schools. When the family found success, they continued to homeschool as their family grew. Family 3's participant spoke about her daughter's experiences,

I considered homeschooling about the time when our twins came along. Our oldest daughter felt nervous when approaching her teachers in public schools. She

felt insecure, and I decided it was time to explore other options. It is funny, but

Julie wants to be a schoolteacher, and she does an excellent job with the twins.

The twins just love her.

Family 3 chose to homeschool their children in response to the adverse experiences of their oldest child while attending a public school. They believed it was the best option for them to homeschool their children. Family 2's participant spoke about an issue she had with her oldest son,

My friend introduced me to homeschooling. It was something I wanted to do, too.

Our son has a speech impediment problem, and I felt that the [public] school was too slow to find resources that would help our son. We went to a private practitioner to help our son, and with time and prayer, he managed to solve most of his speech problem.

After a long pause, she continued,

With my son, I began each day with oral reading [with my son] from literature books. In time, he started to read back to me. This took some practice, and he felt comfortable reading to me. I do not think he would have felt that way with kids in [public] schools.

For this family, the mother was able to give her son the individual attention he needed to minimize his speech impediment. By homeschooling, the mother was able to individualize her child's curriculum that emphasized oral reading on a daily basis.

***The family is the center.*** One of the most influential themes found by analyzing the data was that the family is the center. For the participants, their lives revolved around

their family and the family culture. Many expressed that homeschooling was the best way to ensure that their family held together and was able to be strong. The participants felt that their children should respect and obey their parents or guardians.

***Time with family.*** All of the 10 interviewed participants felt that time with family was an important issue. I was able to find this subtheme throughout the interviewed transcripts. Spending time together created stronger bonds that enabled each of the families to strengthen its morals and Christian values. Family 2's participant used the phrase, "Discipline in love can only come from families." Another family (Family 4) stated, "Homeschooling is a 24-hour job; it is never finished." Family 4 added, "sending kids to public schools interrupts our day-to-day schedules." Family 8's participant said,

[H]omeschooling parents are with their children "24/7," and you become familiar with who they are and how they learn and experience life, for us that really helps to decide on the method and how to go about selecting curriculum for them.

The participants felt that homeschooling enabled them to know their children and their abilities. By homeschooling, they were brought closer together. The mother from Family 1 was particularly eloquent when she stated, "We just wanted to homeschool so we can be together as a family. To me, there are too many things that get in the way in many families. I want my children to experience family."

***Passing on values.*** The subtheme of passing on values was essential to all of the interviewed participants. The thread of family values runs through every interview conducted. The families all seem to agree that putting family first would enable them to

share their values and pass them on to the next generation. The participant in Family 8 stated,

We stand firm on our beliefs that homeschooling is the very best form of schooling where you can institute Christian beliefs, godly character, morals, and values. Home is a place that fosters family love and confidence. There's no having to find "you" later in life. You know who you are, and you boldly enter[ed] the world as a grown-up ready to meet life head-on. You are eager to take on responsibility, and homeschooling is where all of your love spending time [is spent] with family. It eliminates the separation of parents and children; there is no generation gap. Homeschooled children actually listen and obey their parents. There is no question of authority, and they are not pulled in different directions on who or what to believe.

As supported by the participants' quotes, it was evident that the family unit should have primacy over any outside influences or individuals. By keeping the family unit close at home with limiting outside exposures, they can pass on their philosophy. The same family (Family 8) further stated that public schooling was a direct attack on their values and beliefs,

Parents begin teaching their children from day one about every detail in life whether they realize it or not. Children are like sponges; they soak everything up. We begin seeing how easily influenced they were. We read a book entitled, *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle*, rules the world, which was quite an eye-opener. When one goes back to research [how] public schools came about and the reasons

for it, it is all quite scary. Communism's goal was to separate children from their parents so that the state/government can have sole influence and control of its citizens. Public schools were implemented for this reason. As well-meaning in our public schools [are, the] ultimate [aim] is spreading Satan's agenda. [It] is well at work.

These families felt that they know what is best for their children and that by educating their children at home, their family values are strengthened and maintained. They believed that extensive state and federal systems would minimize or even negate their family's values. Family 1's participant spoke about how she wanted to continue homeschooling as a family tradition,

When [REDACTED] and I graduated from our high school, we knew we would get married one day, and when we had children, we were going to homeschool our children. Homeschooling is very strong in this region of the county. We knew this was the thing to do. Another concern we had about public schools was violence. I want our children to have a safe place to learn, and I can provide that at home. Again, [REDACTED] and I wanted to homeschool our children. [REDACTED] came from a homeschooling family, and I thought we should continue the tradition.

Murphy (2012) from his homeschooling research suggested that families could affect (a) academic accomplishment, (b) social upbringing, and (c) children's success while homeschooling. Some critics of homeschooling claimed no substantial evidence proves that homeschooling improves academic achievement; however, studies have not suggested that homeschooling was harmful to children (Murphy, 2012; Ray, 2010). A

participant from Family 8 further stated, “Life experience is what teaches us best.

Allowing children to learn and grow at their pace is [the] key.”

***Good behavior.*** By analyzing the data further, the importance of good behavior became evident. The interviewed families believed by keeping their children at home and providing a stable education based on Christian values, their children will become well behaved and better adjusted in dealing with people of different ages. The mother of Family 9 claimed,

I do want to teach my sons self-control, good stewardship, and wisdom. I do not believe public schools can do these things well, and it is the family’s responsibility to teach these things that are good. I believe Proverbs was written for boys who are going into manhood. As an example, I, we want our sons to keep their father’s commands and that they do not forsake their mother’s teaching. We knew some friends who homeschooled their children. They are not here, but they were a good family. The children were well behaved, and we want that for our children. We want to make sure that our children behaved like their friends. I do not think you get that from any public schools.

The participant from Family 5 also spoke about manners. This mother said, “I know it is hard to believe at a time like [this] when families are so distracted in many ways that some families [will] take the time to enjoy a family meal with lively discussions.”

Families 4, 5, and 8 claimed that the local citizens of their respective communities praised their children for their manners. The mother from Family 9 stated, “[O]ur sons are true gentlemen, and they know how to behave a lot better than the kids attending



public school.” Family 2 participant stated, “I believe our kids adjusted well, and they are matured people.” Kunzman and Gaither (2013) reported that most conservative homeschooling parents/guardians feel that they have an obligation to teach their children God’s ways in dealing with people in different situations.

***Commitment to the family.*** The subtheme of commitment to family was another strong thread from the interviews. All of the interviewed participants felt that the family is the most critical institution in society. Murphy (2012) agreed with this sentiment. Family 4’s participant felt that “[T]oday’s families [were] facing too many distractions that kept them from being a family.” Another family participant (Family 8) opined, “It seems that every day, there is something that kids must do, and that is too bad for families.” Kunzman and Gaither (2013) agreed that homeschooling fathers and mothers are essential to each other. Statistics revealed most homeschoolers come from two-parent households (89%), and about one-half or more of the homeschooling families participate in the workforce (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). These statistical figures play a significant role in allowing parents/guardians to spend more time with their children when compared to families with two incomes (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). The commitment between parents/guardians is vital to the success of homeschooling families (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016).

***Mother as a teacher.*** This subtheme was another way of showing the importance of family. Homeschooling mothers have contributed to their children’s success as homeschoolers (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). Kunzman and Gaither (2013) indicated that homeschooling mothers tend to follow the school-at-home method for the first few years,

and as they progressed as homeschoolers, their plans could change to a more eclectic approach. The reason for the eclectic change is that mother needed to find effective ways to manage the increased responsibilities and dual roles as teachers and parents/guardians for their children (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013).

All 10 of the interviewed families had the mothers listed as the primary teachers, and their views toward homeschooling remained unchanged, but their teaching methods evolved to meet the individualized needs of their children. Individualization is one of the challenges that homeschooling parents/guardians face when developing their learning curricula to meet both the educational and social needs of their children. Wise-Bauer and Wise (2009, 2016) shared that homeschooling is not an easy task for parents/guardians.

**Subresearch Question 1.** What challenges did parents/guardians face in the development of homeschooling curricula?

One theme became paramount with this research question. The theme was Safe Learning Environment.

***Safe learning environment.*** All of the interviewed participants had something to say about socialization, and they equally felt that their children acted more mature than children who attend public schools. Family 2's participant claimed that he had not witnessed any bullying or violence from other homeschooling children. Bullying is another factor that affects public schools across the United States. In one bullying statistical report (Tyler Clementi Foundation, 2018) claimed that at least 28% of U.S. students in grades 6-12 experienced bullying that led to bodily injuries or verbal abuses among students.

With few exceptions, all of the interviewed participants expressed concerns about school violence and bullying, and Families 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 10 expressed concerns about public school violence. For them, school violence was an essential factor in choosing to homeschool their children. They focused on providing protection and safety for their children. Family 6's participant stated,

Now, in the late 90s, I guess around '97, I became concerned about bullying and violence in the public school [because of] the shooting that took place in Colorado, and recently at Sandy Hook. The statistics may have been overblown, but when a shooting takes place, it is a tragedy. I simply felt sorry for the parents who lost their children in those senseless shootings. Since then, we started to run into many people who wanted to homeschool their children.

The same participant also stated, "Tragedies can take place at any time, but in our support group, we have a policy that parents must stay with their children during the day" during Friday classes. Family 1's participant remarked, "We simply knew this was the thing to do. I want our children to have a safe place to learn, and I can provide that at home."

**Subresearch Question 2.** What learning resources did homeschooling parents/guardians use in small, rural six-county area of the state of Texas?

This sub research question revealed that the Bible is the foundation of all learning resources.

***The Bible is the foundation.*** Except for four of the families, all of them came from a Christian homeschooling support group. All of the THA participants expressed the importance of biblical training in their learning curricula. The support group met each

Friday for 16 weeks for two semesters in each academic year. At the beginning of each Friday session, the children and adults cited pledges to the Holy Bible and the Christian and American flags. The homeschooling support groups also stressed the importance of Christian views and values throughout their opening ceremonies. The children were assigned specific functions during the opening ceremonies.

From my field notes, I made a personal observation with the THA support group and the children deemed to enjoy having their names printed in the opening ceremony. The older children did the opening prayers of the Friday sessions. Throughout the day, the homeschooling students received choices in selecting their classes taught by homeschooling parents or guardians who possessed interests and talents for those subjects. The classes included stories from the *Holy Bible*, grammar or story writing, high-level mathematics, literature, choir, science, and history. All of these classes began with short prayers by the teachers or selected students to seek to understand and for the children to become more focus on their classes. For these families, the support group provided opportunities for socialization for both parents/guardians and children, to expand their curricular offerings, and to reinforce their learning skills.

During their interviews, Family 8's participant summarized the importance of her Christian values, "We want our children to be Godly, and to have Godly principles, and be taught to rely fully on God, not to toss Him aside, and act if He did not matter." Most of the families stated religion as one of the primary reasons they chose to homeschool their children. Many of the families indicated that they began each school session with

biblical studies. Family 6's participant stated, "[We begin our day] with prayer and scripture studies and *Bible* reading." Family 6's participant continued,

We felt that this [homeschooling] was our calling. Moreover, God placed our children in our care for us to raise them up in His ways, and this is how we see our vision as parents of our children. In Psalms, it is essential for parents to teach their children so that the next generation will know.

Family 5's participant remarked,

We started homeschooling while I was in the Army. We, my wife and I, did not like the way government schools were teaching [our] children, and we felt that we could give a much better education [that will] include our Christian beliefs.

The participant of Family 5 attempted to send her children to public schools, but they were not satisfied. The family considered private schools but felt that the option was too expensive. In the end, they chose to homeschool their children in ways that they thought were important to them backed with strong religious values. Family 10's participant agreed and reported,

We chose to homeschool for biblical reasons. My husband and I wanted to raise our children in a Christian home, and not only in our home but wherever we go as a family. In other words, people will know us by our names as God-fearing people. Since we were married, we prayed about this issue. We even discussed homeschooling when we were dating in high school. We came from a large high school, and we were not too thrilled about doing [the] things in high school.

For these families, choosing to homeschool was a serious decision and not one they decided lightly. Family 6's participant spoke about the theology that aided them in shaping the curriculum they used,

We do teach a lot of theologies in our studies, which is a primary tenant for [homeschooling] education that is important. We used semantic theology.

Semantic theology is a concept where all religious thoughts originated with Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and...even before those; there was Augustine, who viewed the *Bible* from man's sins to the views of the world and breaking them down into biblical scriptures. Semantic theology is breaking down the Bible into scriptures to help guide us through life. It talks about Christology or the study of Christ.

The parents wished to ensure that their children will value their Christian faith and that their education contains Christian principles.

Biblical studies were a part of their curriculum, and most families began their training by reading biblical passages. Family 9's participant stated, "I do stress my sons to read the Bible well. We use the King James Version. Of course, there are other versions, but we stress King James." The Holy Bible is an essential component in all of the families' curricula. The knowledge and the correct use of the Holy Bible are vital to their daily lives. The families also want their children to be deeply familiar with the Holy Bible, and to find key scriptures quickly.

**Subresearch Question 3.** How do parents/guardians share their learning resources with other homeschooling households?

The theme socialization runs through parents became the dominant answer to this subresearch question alongside the theme of socialization with other families. The participants were eager to exchange information with other parents/guardians through their participation in planning and social events, and they spoke at length on this subject.

***Socialization runs through parents.*** All of the families talked about socialization. They were emphatic in their rejection of the idea that homeschooled children lack social skills. They talked about the many activities they were able to have with their children, including organized sports, field trips, and events through their church and co-op. The father of Family 6 remarked,

We meet our children's social needs through their church. We tried to get our children involved in various community events. We do field trips and new projects together. In the winter times, we go to visit people in nursing homes and to get to know them. We have allowed our children to go to people's homes to help older adults with their outside chores. In public schools, children are peer focused; whereas, our children deal with people and children of different ages. In most cases, in the public schools, children often deal with their peers who are within one year of their ages. In homeschooling, we do not lump children in age groups. We try to expose our kids to deal with young kids to older kids at the same time. We want our children to interact with young children all the way to older adults because that is real life. In life, when you try to get a job, you will not always work with people who are within a year or two of your age. You will work with broad spectrum of ages.

The interviewed families did make efforts to ensure that their children have opportunities to mingle with other children during park day sessions, opening ceremonies, and sporting events. Family 1's participant stated,

Our homeschooling group is excellent in developing social events for our children. When a homeschooling child graduates, it is a big social event.

Homeschooling families [will] come from various parts of the county to attend [these] graduation events. We also have park days when the children can associate with other homeschooling children. Just recently, we just got back from Texas A&M. Our homeschooling group attended the George Bush Museum, and the kids loved it.

Nearly all of the families mentioned organized sports and utilizing the co-op to go on group field trips to historical sites and museums. The children were able to interact with other children outside of their homes; however, their parents/guardians assisted in most of these events for them.

***Socialization with other families.*** The THA supported the concept of providing social activities for the families to attend. The social events include sporting events that honor homeschooling family night, drama productions from nearby universities, musical concerts, intramural sporting competitions, and graduation ceremonies. All of the interviewed participants valued the importance of social activities. The leaders and members of the THA support group would share their information about upcoming events that may provide social and learning activities for their families. Family 5's participant stated, "There is no lacking of socialization. Even the boys of our co-op



played in the state [basketball] tournament and went on to play in the national tournament, and we won there, too.”

Saunders’s (2010) findings agree with the comments made by the interviewed families in regards to socialization. Saunders observed that homeschooled children exercised mature judgment with their peers and with adult members outside their families. Kate (2015) of An Everyday Story blog claimed that the lack of socialization is a problem with homeschoolers. Kate suggested that socialization needs implementation on a daily basis that is consistent and persistent much like in the public schools. Kate further opined that even though homeschooling families have a great deal of freedom to choose what kind of socialization to experience for their children, but parents and guardians need to apply purposely their networking experiences within their communities.

### **Discrepancies**

When reviewing for discrepant cases, I did not detect any statements made by the participants that were different or unusual from the other participants. The participants all agreed on the premise that parents or guardians should have the right to educate and to provide a safe learning environment for their children. Based on the study, all of the participants stressed the importance of keeping their children’s curriculum real and practical, the need of family time, the importance of a safe-learning environment, the need for biblical training, and the necessity of having an acceptable social program. Each of the participants were given opportunities to review their respective interviewed transcripts for accuracy and to provide additional comments if needed. One of the main

purposes for reviewing the transcripts with the participants was to reveal issues or topics that were left unsaid or in need of clarification.

### **Evidence of Quality**

The interviews provided opportunities for the participants to reflect on their words to provide more depth when discussing their homeschool experiences. The participants aligned themselves with certain kinds of homeschooling methods that included the following: classic approach, unit studies approach, and the traditional approach. I used tables or charts to illustrate and describe possible explanations of how parents/guardians developed their homeschooling curricula in the forms of clusters or data segments. By obtaining clusters or data segments, it was possible to generalize some of the concepts used by homeschooling curriculum developers. When reviewing the delimiting factors of this study, it would be difficult to base any generalizations based on the findings of 10 homeschooling participants who resided in a rural, six-county area in central Texas.

### **Summary**

The intent of the research project was to explore the challenges parents/guardians face in developing their learning curricula within the state of Texas and to reveal what resources parents used in the development of their children's learning curricula. To meet the state of Texas' requirements for homeschooling, home educators must perform in good faith; the curricula must include visual materials like textbooks or workbooks, and that it must be tailored to include reading, spelling, grammar, arithmetic, and citizenship (Leppert & Leppert, 2008). When assessing homeschooling curricula, I used several questions when interviewing the participants. I asked parents/guardians about their

teaching methods, personal preferences, teaching experiences, and resources used for homeschooling.

The qualitative case study involved 10 participants from a six-county area in a rural section of a southern U.S. state. Six of the 10 participants were THA members, but I did not restrict the project to THA members. The other four participants were not THA members, but they were homeschooling participants. Some of the participants had several years of homeschooling experiences; however, some had only a few years.

To summarize the findings in relation to the research questions, I was able to extract five general themes (i.e., Real and practical curriculum, Family is the center, Safe learning environment, The Bible is the foundation, and Socialization runs through parents). These themes were fully supported by most homeschooling advocates and scholars (Anthony & Burroughs, 2010; Arsen & Ni, 2011;; Gaither, 2017; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2012; Weldon, 2010; Wise-Bauer, 2016). Based on Hanna's (2012) longitudinal study on homeschoolers from the state of Pennsylvania, parents, especially the mothers who participated in the study, may change their methods, materials, and curricula over time because of several factors. Those factors may involve the process, person, contexts, and time (PPCT) model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) that encompasses process, person, context, and time. Human development changes over time because of the influences of the process (learning), people (personal characteristics), context (the learning environment), and time (growth and development).

The next section presents the purpose and guidelines of using a white paper as a deliverable product listing the results of the study. In Section 3, I provided the rationale for the use of the white paper to include its purpose and its historical nature of identifying problems or challenges that people may face and to provide solutions or recommendations for those challenges derived from the literature review. The white paper also lists several recommended ways of incorporating the core subject areas as required by the state of Texas. The white paper product identified the concerns that the participants had in developing both proficiency and progress in their curriculum development in the required subjects as mandated by the state of Texas.

### Section 3: The Project

#### **Introduction**

With the broad range of methods and resources used in the development of homeschool learning curricula, it is essential and constructive for parents/guardians to share their ideas, techniques, and learning resources with other homeschooling families (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). Homeschooling parents/guardians should use their best judgment in the development of their children's learning curricula that will meet their academic and social needs and interests, and parents/guardians must remain vigilant and press toward those endeavors (Murphy, 2012). However, as discussed in Section 2, within a small population in central Texas, homeschooling parents/guardians are not making optimal use of the resources available to them. Thus, I designed and developed a white paper listing that recommended homeschooling practices and resources.

The white paper will serve as a position paper for the THA leadership committee to review, and they will be asked to consider sharing this white paper with their membership. The first step is approval by the THA leadership committee, which is the leadership body that provides directions and planning support to assist homeschooling family members with activities that would be difficult for single families to do by themselves. Some of the services provided by THA are field trips, park days, sporting activities, tutoring services, educational programs, college days, and other social activities. The THA leadership committee consists of five members elected by the general membership.

If approved by the THA leadership committee, I will distribute the white paper to THA members and their guests for their review. The goal of the project is to provide THA members with recommendations to improve their homeschooling practice based on the findings of this study. The white paper was developed to assist parents/guardians with school-aged children in the development of their customized learning curricula.

It was essential to interview homeschooling parents/guardians who provided insightful explanations and personal views about their experiences as curriculum developers for their children's education (see Yin, 2014). Understanding the processes that parent-educators had to go through when developing their children's homeschooling curricula could aid other parents/guardians to become useful curriculum developers for their children with efficient learning outcomes (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2012). In the white paper (see Appendix E), I made curriculum recommendations designed to meet the five themes extracted from the data and described in Section 2. The themes were,

1. Real and practical curriculum,
2. Family is the center,
3. Safe learning environment,
4. The Bible is the foundation, and
5. Socialization runs through parents.

In the following section, I outline the project, including its description, a rationale, and a review of the literature. Once these choices become evident, I proceed with a

discussion of the logistics of the project's implementation, an evaluation of the project, and the implications for social change.

### **Rationale**

The rationale for the white paper format stems from the results of the present study and from recommendations revealed in my review of the literature. To share these results with the individuals in the best position to influence change, I used the white paper approach for THA leadership committee to review, to respond, and to distribute to member households when approved. In the white paper, I addressed the motives homeschooling participants had in the development of their children's learning curricula and provided additional recommendations designed to assist parents/guardians in the development of their children's learning curricula.

The exploratory case study provided insights as to the how and why individual families chose specific learning materials for their children's learning curriculum (see Yin, 2014). The five themes revealed in the study suggested that participants homeschooled primarily to maintain a family-centered educational background that was both safe and supported religious values for their children. Through the use of positive role models and appropriate modeling behaviors, the parents/guardians provide the kind of socialization that would benefit their children to have contact with others outside their homes (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2012; Kate, 2015). The participants also noted the importance of effective curricula delivered in the safe environment of the home, outside of potentially corrupting influences. Participants feel that outside influences, such as the Internet and entertainment industries, were the cause for negative socialization.

Homeschooling scholars claimed that homeschooling parents/guardians could develop their own children's learning curricula, and they can do this successfully with lower child-to-educator ratios and with their values emphasized (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2012; Weldon, 2010; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016). When compared to public and private schools, homeschooling families have increased flexibility in choosing their learning curricula, but one of the most significant challenges facing homeschooling families is that not all states govern homeschooling the same way in regard to curriculum development.

State school laws regulating homeschooling differ extensively (Gaither, 2017; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). In the state of Texas, parents/guardians of school-aged children do not need to notify or submit their curricula to public school authorities for approval. Regardless of the governing regulations from the individual states, homeschooling parents/guardians who want to provide a good education for their children need to select proper learning resources and materials that will increase their children's autonomy and self-reliance (Gaither, 2017; Murphy, 2012; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016). Because of the lack of guidance from the state of Texas, individuals had a wide range of curricula and planning practices, as revealed in the interviews, which may have led to significant variability in the quality of education their children received.

The interviews highlighted the lack of formal curricular planning among participants in this sample. All of the interviewees developed their curriculum, but the materials emerged based on trial and error, rather than as a result of systemic planning. Because of the necessity of a clear, delineated curriculum for homeschooling success



(Puerling, 2012; Wise-Bauer, 2016), the lack of a clear plan may prove detrimental to homeschooling families. Even when participants used professionally developed curricula, they typically did not adhere to them strictly, and instead adopted the curricula based on their ideological perceptions.

Considering that none of these participants had formal educational training, as consistent with Means et al.'s (2010) findings, I perceived a need for an alternate avenue available to homeschooling parents/guardians to share resources for an efficient curriculum development. Murphy (2012) claimed that many learning resources exist that parents/guardians may use when developing their children's learning curricula, and "there is also a good deal of variability" of learning resources that "stretch across a continuum from highly unstructured to highly structured" curricula (p. 106). However, among the interviewees, some of their curricular decisions emerged from trial and error decision-making, suggesting that some students may be missing out on the benefits of a well-structured homeschooling experience based either on one or both ideological and pedagogical reasons. From the interviews and other findings, I was able to develop a white paper designed to assist the THA leadership committee and its members with best practices for designing curriculum from the views and thoughts of homeschooling parents/guardians who participated in the project.

Thus, the results from the qualitative interviews suggested that an intervention was necessary. To assist THA in building a robust, efficient collaborative networking system, I developed a list of findings from the present study and recommendations for implementing effective curriculum planning in line with the concerns revealed in the

qualitative interviews. I also supported the recommendations with research conducted by leading homeschooling scholars that correlated with the significant motivational factors shared by homeschooling participants. The THA leadership committee may also disseminate the white paper to members and their guests.

Based on the findings from the study, I outlined recommendations with the intent of assisting THA members. Specific recommendations included resources for effective curriculum planning based on the five themes found through the qualitative results. Handley (2014) opined that writers of white papers should avoid long or less frequently-used words, long sentences, or long paragraphs. Without proper punctuation marks embedded within long paragraphs, one's mind may fail to reevaluate or understand the written texts (Handley, 2014). With the education levels of the participants as depicted in Table 1, I am confident that the parents/guardians will be able to use the information as presented in the white paper.

### **Review of the Literature**

When considering the appropriate genre for this project, I decided to use a white paper approach that offered solutions to the challenges faced by homeschooling families when developing their children's learning programs. In the white paper (see Appendix E), I emphasized the results from Section 2, and how those results can apply in the development of an effective homeschooling learning curriculum. I considered the white paper genre on the same level as brochures and other kinds of articles designed to assist readers to identify positions or thoughts that they may have experienced as homeschoolers. In this particular case, the white paper outlined some of the insights

shared by the interviewed homeschooling participants when developing their children's learning programs. It was also an attempt to engage homeschooling families in working jointly with others to implement excellent educational practices in an effective learning platform.

The literature review includes both the theoretical framework and the review of homeschooling sources with an emphasis on reading, grammar, spelling, mathematics, and citizenship. Through the review, I also addressed the search methods used for identifying homeschooling sources for this project. Other issues addressed are the saturation of literature, the definition of a white paper, and the crafting of the white paper.

### **Theoretical Framework**

When developing/designing effective children's learning programs, I used the Bronfenbrenner's ecological model that includes PPCT. This model served as an appropriate theoretical framework for this study. Bronfenbrenner noted that processes (the first *P* of the PPCT model) are learning or new skills events (e.g., reading, writing, playing, or acquiring new learning skills) that develop and grow more complex over time. The person part (the second *P* of the PPCT model) refers to the personal characteristics of individuals, such as age, gender, skin color, and size or physical appearances of people (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). For this particular study, the second *P* of the PPCT model represented that the primary teachers were women. The third part (context) of the PPCT model refers to the learning environment of the ecology (e.g., home, church, clubs, or peer groups; Tudge et al., 2009). The PPCT model can apply to various homeschooling activities. The *T* portion of the PPCT model represents time.

When developing learning programs, it is essential that parents and guardians observe their children's interactions with their surroundings and how they are affected by familiar adults (Bronfenbrenner, 2011; Hayes, O'Toole, & Halpenney, 2017).

With this study, the participants shared the learning experiences of their children in various outside activities (e.g., worship activities, 4-H activities, sporting events, library visits, and field trip visits). *Time* plays a "crucial role in the theory" (Tudge et al., 2009, p. 201). It would be difficult to assess the growth of any learning activity (e.g., reading, writing, mathematics, or other learning activities) or the growth of any organization without considering the issue of how much time was involved (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Hayes et al., 2017).

Per Bronfenbrenner's (2005) PPCT model, communication becomes an essential part of human development. If homeschooling parents/guardians are not willing to communicate or to share their ideas and learning resources with other homeschooling families, they cease to work as a team, and their ownership of a homeschooling group becomes questionable (Murphy, 2012). The white paper genre may bring a degree of accountability in curriculum development, as well as provide networking opportunities for the homeschooling parents/guardians that may improve the overall quality of the homeschooling-learning environment.

### **Interconnections of Theory and Findings From the Study**

This study provided opportunities for the interviewed participants to reflect on their feelings and their stories toward homeschooling their children. I was able to connect Bronfenbrenner's ecological model with the PPCT concept to the findings shared by the

participants. The findings of the study revealed five general themes that included: (a) Real and practical curriculum, (b) Family is the center, (c) Safe learning environment, (d) The Bible is the foundation, and (e) Socialization runs through parents. This following subsections are subdivided into Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model.

**Process.** The procedural portions of the PPCT model include all of the five general themes. The processes may involve learning new academic skills or refining those skills that become more complex over time. Every family faces changes and challenges, especially when youths plan to go to colleges and universities or to join military services (Bronfenbrenner, 2011). Even the family structure changes over time because of health reasons, death of love ones, or divorce.

**Person.** This portion of the PPCT model involved both the children and the adults who influenced their lives in their studies. In this research, it was mainly the mothers who were their children's teachers in the subject areas (i.e., reading, grammar, writing, mathematics, and citizenship) required by the state of Texas. The area of elective subjects, such as animal husbandry, music, art, team/individual sports, or business-related projects, may involve both mothers and fathers, guardians, or other adults who specialized in some of those elective subjects or interests. Individual families will determine the methods and sources used when teaching their children (Healy, 2010; Murphy, 2012; Pannone, 2014; Ray, 2009; Weldon, 2010, 2012; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016).

**Context.** The contextual portions of the PPCT model refer to the learning environments of home, church, social clubs, and peer groups (Tudge et al., 2009). The

participants of this study expressed the importance of the five general themes in the contexts of their children's learning environment.

**Time.** Time plays an essential role in the PPCT model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Family's 8 participant noted it was important to block a certain amount of time for learning, but "quality time should be reserved for the family, and I want our children to know their parents" (private discussion, July 6, 2014). The participant further stated an old Polish Proverb, "You have a lifetime to work, but children are young only once." In short, time transcends throughout the five general themes as expressed in Section 2.

### **Search for Homeschooling Resources**

For the review of the literature, I used the following search engines: Google Chrome, Google, Eric, Safari, and Walden's library sources. The search included the following terms, *homeschooling support groups*, *curriculum planning*, *white paper*, *motivations for homeschooling*, *ideological reasons for homeschooling*, *pedagogical reasons for homeschooling*, *state requirements for homeschooling*, and *homeschooling workshops*. I also used authors' names when doing searches on homeschooling. I followed the advice of one of my professors at Wayland Baptist University by keeping an updated list of authors who have written books or articles about education. One of the books introduced by the professor was *Why Children Fail* by Holt (1964). This text was a required reading in one of my education classes. Based on this one source, my library section has grown to contain numerous education-related books, and I included several homeschooling authors with this list.

### **Saturation of Sources**

When doing searches of articles and books about curriculum planning for homeschoolers, I encountered articles or books that were similar in content. Some of the my sources were more than 10 years old or older, but the information remains current when compared to newer sources. It also appears that newer sources published in the last few years remain anecdotal or qualitative (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2012). The quantitative studies are limited to states that require notifications from parents/guardians who plan to homeschool their children (Murphy, 2012). Only in the notified states can a researcher perform quantitative studies (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2012).

### **Five General Themes and White Paper Recommendations**

From the interviews, each of the participants reflected on the reasons they chose to homeschool their children. With the participants' reasons for homeschooling, I was able to yield five general themes with recommendations to implement the participants' reasons for homeschooling. The recommended method for disseminating the five general themes and findings is the white paper.

### **Five General Themes**

The interviewed participants wanted their children to experience a real and practical curriculum, quality time with the family, a safe learning environment, a strong biblical training program, and a wholesome, well-grounded social life. Homeschooling parents can incorporate the five general themes into their children's learning curricula. I

make connections between the themes and white paper recommendations in the following subsections.

**Real and practical curriculum and recommendations.** The interviewed participants wanted a learning program that their children can use in day-to-day activities, such as writing correspondence, finding good deals from commercial stores, or evaluating how many acres of grassland will feed a large herd of cattle in a wet or drought condition. Real and practical curriculum must also meet the curriculum requirements from the state of Texas, which include an emphasis on math, grammar, reading, spelling, writing, and citizenship (Williams, 2013). Therefore, recommendations related to this topic include resources, practical tips that could be easily implemented, specific ideas for lessons and curriculum guidance, and a reminder of the state of Texas' requirements.

Key recommendations in the white paper included information about how to provide effective homeschooling content to meet the state of Texas' requirements. For example, the white paper includes information about the importance of reading, which serves as a lynchpin to allow the readers to understand the skills needed in science, history, literature, and mathematical word problems (Hadden & Gear, 2016; Layne, 2015; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016). Further, I suggested that these skills could improve students' abilities to perform on standardized assessments by emphasizing that there are numerous testing agencies that homeschooling parents/guardians can use to see if their children are utilizing their learning skills. As an example, if students concentrate on Latin



and Greek root words, they tend to score well on the language skills areas of the test (Flanigan, 2015).

Similarly, to emphasize writing and grammar, I used Warriner's (1995) *Holt's High School Handbook 1* to share with the white paper readers. There are other useful sources to consider, but this is the supplemental handbook I used throughout my high school teaching career. Warriner (1995) suggested that young writers should consider the purpose, the audience, and the tone for their proposed writing projects. The purpose of writing may include, (a) to express an opinion, (b) to create a genre (e.g., short story, poem, play, or novel), (c) to inform or explore documents, or (d) to persuade readers much like the letters to the editor of a local or regional newspaper (Warriner, 1995). When writing to readers (the audience), the readers expect certain things from their writers. They want writers to write in "clear and easy to understand" sentences (Warriner, 1995, p. 360). In regards to the tones in writing, writers can use formal or informal word usages that are either personally attached or detached from their thoughts. The tips in all sections emphasized practicality and real-world experiences to match the tone of the interviews and the Real and practical curriculum theme.

Furthermore, participants' emphasis on the practicality of curriculum resulted in the emphasis on transportability in the white paper. Murphy (2012) claimed that homeschooling parents/guardians need assurances that they are meeting the educational needs of their children. The white paper includes a basic chart for equivalence to improve transportability of curriculum for parents and increase their perceptions that making changes may further improve their children's career readiness. The recommendation for

reading also echoed the focus on practicality and nonfiction resources, in line with Lemov, Driggs, and Woolway (2016), who encouraged students to read more nonfiction articles. Nonfiction readings often require a significant amount of prior knowledge, but at the same time, nonfiction books and articles can build on that knowledge with additional information that will prepare students for the rigors of college learning (Lemov, Driggs, et al., 2016).

**Family is the center and recommendations.** All 10 of the participants listed the importance of family as one of the top reasons for homeschooling. During the interviews, the words family or families were mentioned 471 times. The participants wanted their children to experience the value of quality time within their respected families. Participants noted that socialization was already integrated into THA through park days, which I used to make recommendations about collaboration.

This theme influenced the white paper in the consideration of parents being unwilling to use outside sources or to incorporate other families into their curriculum planning. As discussed in Section 2, one of the strengths of practical homeschooling curricula is that parents/guardians can outsource specific subjects by hiring tutors who possess extensive knowledge and skills in specific core subject areas, such as advanced mathematics, science, music, sports, or art (Gaither, 2017; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016). Homeschooling families can pool their resources together in a homeschooling support group to solicit individuals who would like to teach specific subjects of their interests that are outside their traditional high-school curriculum (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016). However, the interviews with the families suggested that some distrust of

prepared curriculum materials may exist; families in the present sample preferred to sort through materials to generate their curricula. I emphasized the importance of collaboration within THA as a method of ensuring families would feel comfortable with those they were collaborating with, as well as to help ensure that families would not feel threatened in their insularity during collaboration.

**Safe learning environment and recommendations.** This theme appeared numerous times from the participants. Two of the parents expressed their concerns that they want their children to have a learning environment that will protect them from other children who may ridicule their children's speech impediments. Four other participants expressed concerns about violence and disruptions in the public schools. I noted that in creating the white paper, there should be an emphasis on eliminating elements that THA members may perceive as dangerous or harmful, which was partially achieved by integrating Christian resources and curricula.

The key way the safe learning environment theme influenced the white paper creation was through the use of Internet information. Based on my interviews with the participants, there was some distrust for outside materials on the Internet. The findings were consistent with Wise-Bauer and Wise's (2009, 2016) concerns about the risk of inappropriate, explicit online materials. Even with the distrust of Internet material, Puerling (2012) and Walters (2015) opined that teachers and parents/guardians should learn about the digital environment of the Internet to prepare their students or children to meet their academic needs. The pace of developing new technology is occurring rapidly to the point that recently developed technology will soon become outdated or discarded

(Puerling, 2012; Walters, 2015). Merriam et al. (2007) suggested making learning a life-long process that will meet new changes when they occur, and the Internet can provide numerous learning opportunities (Puerling, 2012; Walters, 2015).

Some scholars suggest that parents/guardians and teachers should approach Internet use with caution (Puerling, 2012; Walters, 2015; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016). Wise-Bauer and Wise (2009, 2016) advised parents/guardians to monitor and restrict their children's access to home computers that have Internet capability. Online pornographers usually spam electronic mailboxes by inserting deceptive mail linking to X-rated sites (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016). Researchers recommended not to rely on filters designed to keep out unwanted Internet information (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). Because of the distrust expressed in the interviews, the resources suggested to parents were exclusively in print form, to avoid alienating potential readers within THA.

With a significant amount of information received from the Internet, parents/guardians nevertheless need to teach their children how to save, store, and retrieve data from the Internet (Puerling, 2012). To learn how to save, store, and retrieve data from the Internet can be a challenging task, but the skills are essential for families who want to evaluate their data critically and accurately (Puerling, 2012). Wise-Bauer and Wise (2009, 2016) further suggested that parents/guardians must show their children what to do when faced with Internet sources that may inflict harm or impart faulty information. As Internet users, children must learn how to extract Internet information by exercising proper decision-making processes coupled with common sense (Walters, 2015). Therefore, it may be that future researchers should examine interventions for

encouraging homeschooling families in rural areas to use the Internet in a method that they find appropriate.

**The Bible is the foundation and recommendations.** Six of the 10 participants mentioned the need for biblical training as a part of their children's learning program. The THA stressed the importance of biblical training in its weekly Friday sessions for two 16-week periods starting in September and ending in May of each school year. In the opening ceremonies, the youths cite pledges to the flag of the United States, the Christian flag, and to the Bible. Based on this finding, I included information from religious institutions by suggesting that THA parents use outside resources, including Accelerated Christian Education, Alpha Omega, Bob Jones, and Christian Light Education, to ensure that the professional materials meet the requirements revealed in the interviews.

**Socialization runs through parents and recommendations.** All of the participants expressed the importance of proper behavior in both public and private settings. Family 8's participant expressed that the lack of socialization in a homeschooling learning environment was not true, and that homeschooling youths are more well-behaved when compared to public school children. To incorporate this theme, in addition to ensuring that parents still felt agency in being able to assess their children's needs and make adjustments to curricula as needed, I focused primarily on the parents as decision-makers and avoided discussing children as potential agents in the curricular changes. For example, in discussing citizenship, I emphasized the parent as a supervisor in encouraging agentic activities, such as a student registering to vote or volunteering within the community, rather than focusing on the students doing these activities alone.

### **White Paper Definition**

Stelzner (2006) described a white paper as a 10- to 12-page document designed to reach a particular audience or group of stakeholders in need of solutions to some of the challenges they may face, in this case, homeschooling. Graham's (2013) definition of a white paper can be defined as "a persuasive essay that uses facts and logic to promote a certain product, service, or solution to a problem" (p. 12). Stelzner used white papers as means to identify challenges that clients may have in their area of interests or concerns, and with the identified problems, the white paper authors may offer possible solutions to their clients to consider when addressing those concerns. When white papers are well written, they can assist stakeholders to make important decisions that may affect the sequel of their core beliefs (Neuwirth, 2014; Scotten, 2011).

**Constructing a white paper.** I used several sources (Graham, 2013; Kanton, 2010; Neuwirth, 2014; Purdue Online Writing Lab, 2015; Scotten, 2011; Stelzner, 2006; Young & Quinn, 2012) in crafting the white paper for this project. Graham (2013) and Stelzner (2006) claimed that white papers had been around for years, but they are now coming to the forefront with the intent to assist people to make essential decisions—decisions that may affect or expand their core beliefs about specific issues.

The development of white papers is a growing phenomenon. Stelzner (2006) claimed that through the use of Google search, white papers had surged to more than 329 million papers in 2006. Graham (2013) offered another assessment of the growth of white paper when he "ran a Google search for 'white paper' that yielded 2.8 million hits in the

year 2002” (p. 15). Ten years later, Graham used the same search engine to generate more than 39 million hits.

For the white paper (see Appendix E), I assembled the findings from education and homeschooling scholars regarding the importance of curriculum collaboration. The collaboration was designed to support homeschooling parents/guardians in the development of their children’s learning curriculum by incorporating the five general themes as revealed by the interviewed homeschooling participants of 2015. As a writer, I used a linear approach when developing the white paper by using the following questions:

1. Will I target the right audience?
2. Will I engage the readers?
3. Will I be able to inform the readers?
4. Will I convince to the readers?

One of the best ways to attract, engage, inform, and convince the target audience is to share with them what researchers know about their concerns and challenges as homeschoolers (Graham, 2013). Based on the 2015 interviews, I was able to understand the strong commitment that the participants had with their motivational factors to homeschool their children and to share those elements in the white paper. The hope was that, by using the white paper format, it would connect me with the target audience.

**Audience for suggested medium.** I did not want to view homeschooling individuals as outsiders, and I supported their decisions to homeschool their children. The interviewed participants taught me how the parents/guardians developed their children’s

learning curriculum and how they prepared their children's future. The sample shared some of the barriers that homeschoolers face when educating their children. Through this study, I became aware of several hallmarks or characteristics of the homeschooling audience. Before homeschooling was legal in all 50 states, homeschoolers had to be very protective of their privacy, but the future appears well for homeschooling families, especially in the technological age (Gaither, 2017).

Barriers to homeschooling have diminished in the past 25 years, but potential barriers remain (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). These challenges led to the perceptions that, as Family 8 opined, homeschoolers should resist governmental intrusions into families who wish to educate their children at home. Lambert, president of the Texas Home School Coalition, stated, "Let's not assume that our parental rights will never be challenged" (2015, p. 5). Thus, I assumed that the audience would require special consideration regarding the infringement of their autonomy. For this reason, I intended to work within the THA, which is a trusted resource for homeschooling families in this particular region of the state of Texas.

**Crafting of the white paper.** In planning for the white paper, I followed the guidelines of "digging deeper" used by Diller (2016, p. 8):

1. What is the importance of homeschooling?
2. How does one share or release those feelings with their children?
3. Is it important to share thoughts and beliefs with other homeschooling parents/guardians?



4. How does one show the importance of the five general themes with their children?
5. Are there other themes to consider?
6. Will these five themes allow children to become independent learners?

It will be necessary to have proposed planning session(s) with the homeschooling parents/guardians with the approval of the THA executive committee. The time and place for the discussion of the findings would be at the convenience of THA members and their guests. The goal of the discussion period is to share ownership of the five general themes offered by the interviewed participants in the spring of 2015.

I also wanted to write a white paper with simple words that were informative and engaging (see Neuwirth, 2014). For white papers to be successful, a writer needs, (a) to have an audience to write to, (b) to express an interesting and compelling topic, (c) to write the content in a logical flowing manner, (d) to post in an unique presentation, and, above all, (e) to state facts in a truthful manner (Kanton, 2010; Handley, 2014).

In crafting the white paper, I used (a) short paragraphs consisting of not more than three sentences, (b) short sentences of no more than 25 words each, and (c) simple, straightforward words without using clichés or jargon (see Handley, 2014). I also used the Readability Statistics from Microsoft Office Word for the white paper (see Table 8). The Readability Statistics include both tables and figures along with the text.

Table 8

*Readability Statistics*

Counts		
	Words	4559
	Sentences	199
	Paragraphs	164
Averages		
	Sentences per paragraph	3
	Words per sentences	20.6
Readability		
	Passive voice	2.5%
	Flesch reading ease	31.4
	Flesch-Kincaid grade level	13.4

The averages correspond with Handely's (2014) average recommendations for the number of sentences per paragraph and the number of words per sentence. In the area of readability, most individuals with a 12th-year reading level can understand the contents of the white paper. The goal of the white paper was to present recommendations for effective curriculum planning to the THA based on the five general themes revealed through the qualitative study.

### **Project Description**

In Appendix E, I designed and published a white paper for THA members to consider sharing with families as they prepare for the 2018–2019 academic school year. The white paper shares recommendations for incorporating the five general themes revealed in the qualitative study into an effective learning curriculum. Specifically, I

propose that homeschooling families use existing curricula from credible resources; plan sound curricula through the use of tenets based on research; receive feedback from the THA community through collaborations; and integrate appropriate record-keeping systems. These recommendations were informed by the values conveyed and challenges experienced by the participants in the 2015 qualitative study.

The white paper includes several strategies for curriculum planning, including setting out a clear plan at the beginning of the semester, using previously developed resources with a Christian foundation, and collaborating on curricula with fellow THA members. These recommendations were based on the findings related to curriculum planning, especially that families often pieced together their instructional plan from various sources as they went. Precise planning is essential to effective curricula(Weldon, 2010; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016), so providing recommendations for designing effective curricula was a primary focus of the white paper.

Additionally, I provided the recommendation that THA members collaborate with each other in their monthly planning sessions with the intent of promoting effective curricula by incorporating the five general themes. I included this recommendation based on the findings regarding socialization; the participants in the study noted they often sought out socialization experiences with other homeschooling families for their children, but when asked about collaborating on schooling resources, they did not mention such an activity. Sammons (2013) noted that collaboration in homeschooling was essential for an effective curriculum development. Finally, I discussed how members could keep appropriate records to ensure efficient, transferable curricula for their children.

The cornerstone of the white paper is the recommendation that THA members collaborate with each other in the development of their individualized curricula. Kate (2015) opined that synergy begins when homeschooling families get together to share their successes and challenging moments with other homeschooling families. Networking allows families to know how to locate and manage their learning resources within their communities that they may not be able to do on their own (Murphy, 2014; Weldon, 2010). Through the sharing of ideas and resources for individual families, I believe that monthly planning sessions of incorporating the five themes would create networking opportunities to parents/guardians to build effective curricular plans.

I plan to release the white paper in August 2018, but the THA directors will determine the date of this presentation, if approved. The white paper presentation intends to receive acceptance with additional input from THA members with their guests for implementing the findings into their THA monthly planning sessions. The degree of acceptance from THA members and guests with their input is the gauge I would use to determine the success of the project.

The implementation of the project required several steps. First, I had to identify the potential resources and support for implementing the project, and then to anticipate potential barriers like scheduling conflicts, costs, locations of events, and the level of membership participation. Based on these assessments, I created a timetable for implementation, as well as a delineation of the roles that each stakeholder may consider when implementing the five general themes successfully.

**Potential Resources and Existing Supports**

The primary potential resources with existing supports lie within the THA leadership committee. The committee will provide the approval to present the white paper. Their support will be essential to build my credibility within the homeschooling community and to ensure the adoption and implementation of the best practices recommended in the white paper. With my established contacts within this group, I will use this relationship as a method of entering the group with a presentation of the results from the interviews.

The interviewed families would also serve as additional resources when establishing rapport with these families, and their concerns were instrumental in developing the recommendations I made. It was through these interviews that the participants provided local and real issues about their experiences as curriculum developers for their family's education. Finally, I must gain support to use the local church to serve as a venue for the white paper presentation and monthly planning sessions.

**Potential Barriers**

One primary barrier to collecting data and implementing the project was gaining trust from a closely-knit homeschooling group. Gaining trust from each of the participants was essential for this project to go forward, especially with homeschooling parents/guardians who are "fiercely independent" (Brightbill, 2013, para 9). One of the most significant concerns that some homeschooling parents/guardians may have about homeschooling research is that it may lead to making recommendations or suggestions

that increase potential homeschooling regulations in the state of Texas (Lambert, 2013).

Therefore, they may feel that the intervention of the white paper, including record keeping, will open increased state supervision and surveillance of homeschooling activities within the state of Texas.

During this study, my primary goal was to convince each of the participants that this project would not be used to restrict or to hinder their homeschooling activities, but rather to embrace and to enhance them. I tried to subvert my perspectives and beliefs about homeschooling. As a former public-school teacher, I do support, with some reservations, the rights of parents/guardians to homeschool their children. I will continue to maintain openness and acceptance toward homeschooling as a viable alternative of teaching children.

Another potential barrier is the lack of attendance at the white paper presentation. As the project is dependent on adoption by homeschooling families, it is essential that homeschooling families attend and provide input. I will use the contacts within the homeschooling community to solicit their participation. To minimize transportation issues, I will consider the THA leadership committee's offer to use the local church as a meeting place for the white paper presentation.

Other potential barriers for the white paper proposal include time, distance, and cost, especially in a rural area of the state of Texas. To overcome these potential barriers, I may consider the use of electronic mail (e-mail) as a way of making the white paper available to THA members. I would most likely attach the white paper to the e-mail

notice for the stakeholders to read. The e-mail distribution of the white paper will only come about with the approval from the THA leadership committee.

### **Proposal for Implementation and Timetable**

Table 9 contains the proposed timetable for the review of the white paper. I anticipate that the review of the white paper will take place in August 2018 because the homeschooling support group will be closing out the fall and spring semesters of the 2017–2018 year and planning for the 2018–2019 school year. The summer months before the new academic year will also provide the THA members enough time to plan for the new school year.

Table 9

#### *Projected Timeline: Possible Acceptance of the White Paper*

Task	Proposed Date	Venue	Participants/Stockholders
Presentation of the white paper and to receive input, comments, and evaluation of the presentation.	August 2018	Local church	Homeschooling families, directors, and guests from the co-op
Present feedback from the stakeholders as to the acceptance of the white paper's findings.	August 2018	Local church	Homeschooling families, directors, and guests from the co-op

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Members of the homeschooling support group and guests will play a significant role in the evaluation of this project. The future status of this project depends on possible input or recommendations from the THA members and guests. It is also essential for THA members and guests to feel they are contributing to the solution when reviewing the findings of the white paper with their recommendations.

**Project Evaluation Plan**

Appendix F depicts an evaluation plan that the stakeholders can use for their input when assessing the recommendations presented in the white paper. The success of this project will depend on the acceptance of the five general themes to include the white paper's recommendations. As a project leader for the white paper project, I plan not only to present facts and findings from this project, but also to convey the importance to stakeholders of their roles in reviewing the white paper and to engage themselves in collaborative discussions about the findings and how to incorporate those findings into their curriculum planning sessions (Neuwirth, 2014). Again, as a reminder, the evaluation plan and the white paper are contingent on the approval from the THA leadership committee.

If approved by the leadership committee, the stakeholders will have opportunities to read the recommendations made from the white paper. If approved by the stakeholders, they will have opportunities to express how they will implement the five general themes into their children's learning curricula. The overall goal of the white paper with its evaluation form is to allow the stakeholders, the homeschooling parents/guardians, to



express their ideas and opinions about the importance of the five general themes or to express other options or ideas for developing effective homeschool learning curricula. The basic concept for the evaluation plan is to allow the THA memberships and their guests to express their concerns or questions about the recommendations outlined by the white paper.

### **Project Implications**

Learning is a social skill that allows for both parents/guardians and children to make useful changes in their lives. These changes will assist homeschooling students to read fluently, to write well, to cipher numbers quickly, to recite prose flawlessly, and to transmit knowledge efficiently (Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016). To make these positive changes for homeschooling students, parents/guardians must identify the right educational paths for their children. Homeschooling can provide both the academic excellence and the social skills needed to make those positive social changes for children (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Murphy, 2014; Ray, 2010; Walters, 2015; Weldon, 2010; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016). Homeschooling parents/guardians can develop effective learning curricula that are designed to meet their children's learning potential through the use of their talents, their personalities, and their learning capabilities (Walters, 2015; Weldon, 2010; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016). Parents/guardians can also modify or adjust their lessons to meet their children's learning styles and academic interests (Murphy, 2012).

I intended to share the findings (themes and subthemes) with homeschooling parents/guardians (the stakeholder) and for those individuals to incorporate those findings into their children's learning curriculum. The study revealed the following results,

1. The interviewed participants stressed the importance of time with family;
2. The need to build a safe learning environment;
3. To develop real and practical lessons;
4. To practice Biblical training; and
5. To promote positive social events for their children.

The implications of this study were twofold: (a) to gain perspective on how selected parents/guardians in a six-county area within the state of Texas develop their learning curriculum, and (b) to explore the feasibility of promoting a networking system designed to assist parents/guardians who are new to homeschooling. The results of the interviews and the project have implications for the local community, as well as more far-reaching consequences.

### **Local Community**

The findings have consequences for the local community. The results of the qualitative interviews suggested that some of the participants understood some best practices of education, such as avoiding oversaturation of content by customizing content learning materials to meet children's needs (Pannone, 2014). The interviews of 2015 also illustrated that some of the participants lacked the training to design effective curricula. Even with this deficiency, parents/guardians were able to get help and advice from a local homeschooling support group. Even local communities have outreach programs similar

to Boys and Girls Clubs, 4-H groups, scouting, and after-school athletic programs designed to provide wholesome, enriching activities for all children. In some cases, homeschooling support groups have contractual agreements to use public school buildings for their learning activities when the buildings were vacant.

Most public libraries have resources designed to assist adults who wish to homeschool their children. One particular library in one the six counties had at least eight homeschooling books. The local homeschooling groups within the six-county area can also provide sufficient learning resources designed to assist both adults and children and, at the same time, meet the homeschooling guidelines for the state of Texas. The Texas Home School Coalition has a search engine designed to list known web addresses and phone numbers of homeschooling groups throughout the state of Texas. The search engine uses zip codes to identify known homeschooling web addresses. As an example, if one were to insert zip code 78942, the following homeschooling groups would result:

1. Bastrop Christian Homeschooling Association – 21 miles away.
2. One Day Academy – Columbus Region – 40 miles away.
3. One Day Academy – Bryan Campus – 45 miles away.
4. Pflugerville Christian Home School Co-op – 45 miles away.
5. One Day Academy – Hutto Campus – 45 miles away.
6. Cedar Park Christian Homeschoolers – 45 miles away.
7. One Day Academy – College Station Campus – 47 miles away.
8. Christian Home Education Association of Central Texas – 48 miles away.
9. WATCH Co-op of Georgetown – 57 miles away.

The THA support group was not a part of the Texas Home School Coalition listings.

The state of Texas does not require formal oversight or approval of homeschooling lesson plans. In cases when students want to transfer back into public schools, homeschooling families would need to document their children's academic records before entering public or private schools for grade placement purposes. Documentation may bring up the issue for transferability between homeschooling families and public or private schools, sometimes resulting in students having to repeat grade levels. By sharing curricula within the homeschooling community, the group and guests may come up with more efficient ways of documenting and assessing their curricula to avoid this type of issue. Also sharing homeschooling content may encourage self-efficacy among homeschooling parents/guardians (Murphy, 2012; Walters, 2015).

### **Far-Reaching**

All of the interviewed participants want an excellent education for their children. On a broad scale, the interviewed participants were able to identify numerous motivational factors to homeschool their children at the local level. By truncating their motivational factors into broader themes, I was able to reduce them into five general themes with the intent of developing strong curricula that maintained an ideologically and unthreatening result that may potentially decrease potential disparities in homeschooling education. The five general themes (i.e., Time with family, Safe learning environment, Real and practical curricula, Biblical training, and Promoting social events) may also increase networking opportunities within and outside the homeschooling communities (see Lambert, 2013; Walters, 2015). However, most scholars support the view that

homeschooling students do well academically and socially when compared to their peers in local public and private schools (Courtney, J., 2015; Martin-Chang, Gould, & Meuse, 2011; Murphy, 2014; Ray 2018).

The findings from the qualitative study have implications for homeschooling curriculum developers. Local community events may provide additional sources that homeschooling parents/guardians can include in their children's learning programs that will likely foster the five general themes. With this in mind, the parents/guardians may become less skeptical of outside materials and more liable to adopt these professional curricula into their homes.

Based on the study, this section outlined the project for translating the findings into results within a homeschooling group located in central Texas. Specifically, based on the audience and problem requirements, I created a white paper to identify the challenges and concerns that homeschooling parents/guardians may have in the development of their children's learning programs. A need existed to support and build a social networking system that would bring homeschooling families together to share their concerns and support with each other. In this section, I presented the logistics of implementing this project, as well as its implications to various stakeholders. To conclude the study, Section 4 includes my reflections on learning and scholarly processes in creating the project study.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Using the themes garnered from interviews with 10 homeschooling families, I developed a white paper to meet the demands of this group of individuals associated with the THA. Again, the project was not restricted to THA members, as any homeschooling families who reside in an adjacent six-county area within the state of Texas can also find this information valuable. In this section, I reflect on the project study, its strengths, its limitations, its future directions, and its conclusion.

### **Project Strengths and Limitations**

As a qualitative researcher, it was essential to find a venue where I could share the findings revealed by the interviewed parents. For this research project, I used the white paper approach as a useful tool to craft a persuasive document that identifies the challenges with proposed solutions (see Neuwirth, 2014). The white paper is intended to provide solutions after identifying the real reasons for homeschooling, as revealed by a small sample of homeschooling participants residing in the state of Texas.

### **Project Strengths**

The white paper project has several strengths. First, I based the recommendations for THA on qualitative interviews and themes from actual THA members and nonmembers residing in the state of Texas. When developing curriculum planning, the interviewed participants emphasized the importance of (a) family commitment, (b) biblical training, (c) social events, (d) real and practical lessons, and (e) safe learning environment. Because most of the interviewed participants expressed skepticism of outside influences, the above themes establish credibility for the white paper to provide

solutions or ideas that parents/guardians may consider in developing effective curricula for their children. The intent was to implement a curriculum guide to meet the educational standards for the state of Texas in the area of reading, math, grammar, spelling, and citizenship that would be both flexible and engaging to homeschool children (see Gambrell et al., 2013; Hadden & Gear, 2016; Humphreys & Parker, 2015; Vorderman et al., 2014; Weldon, 2012; Wise-Bauer, 2016; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016).

I considered the themes along with my research findings to be consistent with most homeschooling scholars (see Hanna, 2012; Murphy, 2012; Pannone, 2014; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016). Gaither (2017), Murphy (2014), Pannone (2014), and this study revealed some common threads about the growth, trends, and challenges faced by homeschooling families. Murphy (2012) also claimed, with the exception of biblical training, that there was a “rough parallelism with the subject matter in public schools” (p. 112).

Another strength of the white paper is that it introduces much needed resources that are unthreatening and adaptable with most homeschooling families. The final product submitted to THA had two goals: (a) to provide a list of learning resources recommended from scholarly homeschooling sources (i.e., Gaither, 2017; Gambrell et al., 2013; Vorderman et al., 2014; Wise-Bauer, 2016; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016), and (b) to propose possible solutions with intent of helping parents/guardians in their development of their children’s education (i.e., Gambrell et al., 2013; Vorderman et al., 2014; Walters, 2015). Within the white paper, I was able to identify some of the best practices shared by

homeschooling scholars (see Appendix E). Through these resources, the project provided concrete direction for the homeschooling families.

### **Project Limitations**

The white paper project also had several potential limitations. Occasionally, I had to examine and remove my perspectives when conducting the interviews to ensure that the views of the families emerged and were revealed in the white paper, rather than my own. One of the best ways to achieve that goal was to be aware of my biases or concerns about homeschooling. However, the views that I may have about homeschooling constituted a potential limitation of the project deliverable. Miles et al. (2014) warned that analytic biases can “weaken or even invalidate” findings (p. 294). To ensure that the findings were not biased, it was essential to do the following, (a) check for representativeness from other scholarly sources; (b) triangulate data sources; (c) use participants’ own words, ensuring consistency; and (d) avoid false relations or assumptions (see Barbour, 2014; Merriam & Tisdale, 2016; Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2013; Silver & Lewins, 2014).

Another possible limitation of the white paper was its particular focus. I limited the findings and associated resources to a particular geographic region, and particularly to the opinions of members of a specific homeschooling group, the THA. As determined in the interviews, this group had a specific religious background. Given these limitations, the ability to transfer the findings to other contexts should follow with caution, realizing that all results from this study may not generalize well or directly to other homeschooling groups.



Finally, in most cases, the white paper was initially limited to the participation of THA members, but four of the 10 participants were not THA members. As a researcher, I recommended the use of the white paper genre as a way of sharing the findings of this study to all of the THA participants and their guests. I intended to make the adoption of the white paper accessible and understandable to all homeschooling families to ensure its acceptance. Even if some of the homeschoolers raised questions about the study, I consider those questions as positive opportunities to create effectual dialogues designed to assist homeschooling parents/guardians in developing quality education with their children. Additionally, when looking back, I noted that some of the participants wanted to say more about their experiences as homeschooling curriculum developers. With this in mind, I gave the participants additional opportunities to review the final product with a summative/evaluation sheet (see Appendix F).

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

Based on the limitations of the project, I developed several recommendations for alternative approaches that may strengthen the study of this kind. To share practical methods and to provide additional educational resources derived from this study, I used the white paper genre as an efficient way of sharing the results of the study derived from Section 2. In the previous sections, I identified a significant challenge with the participants regarding their lack of resources for systemic curriculum planning to meet their needs and expectations as homeschooling educators at a local area. One of the objectives was to create meaningful discourse among parents/guardians in the development of their children's learning curriculum.

**Address the Problem Differently**

An alternative approach in seeking information about a particular topic is the use of focus groups (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). To obtain data from a focus group, one must have a socially interactive group where the participants may react to the comments made by other members of the discussion group (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Focus groups may also provide members to explore views expressed by others (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Focus members do not need to have a consensus with each other, but they must achieve an effective dialogue within the group of sharing their views in relation to the opinions of others (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Murphy (2012) claimed that researchers may want to study trends of homeschooling families when using curricular materials from public schools and other sources. As previously stated, there appears to be a “rough parallelism with the subject matter in public schools” when compared to homeschooling organizations (Murphy, 2012, p. 112). Rather than allowing THA members to collaborate with each other when creating their curricula, I could have used existing curricular plans that exhibit best practices for homeschooling parents/guardians. I discarded this approach because the participants demonstrated significant independence and a reverence for their ability to make their curricular decisions.

**Present Alternative Definitions of the Problem**

Some of the alternative definitions of the problem include necessary skills testing, cost of homeschooling, the merit of homeschooling, and the compatibility of the homeschooling environment within the local community. These terms would add additional knowledge to the study. One example is if local communities benefit from

homeschooled students. Many local businesses hire students as part-time workers, and the question one may ask is if students' homeschooling education is compatible with local job markets. Other questions to consider include,

1. What are the merits of homeschooling?
2. What are the costs of homeschooling?
3. Do homeschooling parents/guardians use assessment testing of their children?

Moreover, if so, how?

Some of the participants touched on these issues, but the questions were not a part of the research project.

### **Alternative Solutions to a Local Problem**

One of the alternative solutions would be to add the questions to the interview process. In the future, alternative approaches for homeschooling studies, interests, and trends may change over time (Murphy, 2014). As an example, movements to link homeschooling families with public schools exist, in particular extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, drama, debates, and music) associated with University Interscholastic League (UIL) activities (Sommers, 2015). It is possible that this proposal in the state of Texas may cause some families to go public with their homeschooling practices (see Sommers, 2015). Homeschooling families will have to identify themselves as homeschoolers if their children want to participate in UIL events (Sommers, 2015).

Currently, 29 states allow homeschooling students to become UIL participants (Sommers, 2015). Opponents of this proposal have claimed that this initiative would place regulations and requirements on homeschooling families if their children wish to

become UIL participants (Texans for Homeschool Freedom, 2017). Of the 29 states that currently have initiatives of linking homeschooling with UIL scholastic events, Sommers (2015) claimed that those states did not increase their requirements for parents/guardians who homeschool their children.

### **Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change**

Through this study, I learned how parents/guardians contribute to the well-being of their children by directly working with their children on their schoolwork. From this project, I summarized the findings and solutions into a deliverable product by using a white paper genre. In the area of leadership and change, it was essential to develop a venue that would enhance dialogues and acceptances within the homeschooling communities.

### **Scholarship**

Through this study, I learned some practical ways of presenting my findings. It was also my first experience using a CAQDAS program to conduct a qualitative study. My handwritten notes with audio recordings had to be converted into analyzable codes designed to “draw and verify conclusions” (see Miles et al., 2014, p. 46). Any potential scholar who wants to consider qualitative research must have a willingness to learn one or more of the many qualitative computer software packages (e.g., AnSWR, ATLAS, CAT, HyperRESEARCH, MAXQDA, and NVivo). As a qualitative research scholar, I learned that coding, storage, search and retrieval, and content analysis were essential when drawing conclusion and verification in a study. I also understand that the role of a scholar is to learn and assess new knowledge; to find additional sources of information

that may contribute to positive changes; and to protect and defend the ownership of copyrighted materials, documents, and ideas developed by other scholars (Rudestam & Newton, 2014). I felt that I had performed those requirements within this study.

Throughout the research process, I learned to elicit rich descriptions of homeschooling participants within their learning environment (see Glesne, 2011; Merriam & Tisdall, 2016; Yin, 2014). As a novice scholar, I discovered the value of asking *how* and *why* questions, as emphasized by Yin (2014), when exploring the reasons why parents/guardians wish to teach their children at home. The how and why questions enabled me to explore the experiences and perceptions of homeschooling parents/guardians and to design targeted intervention based on the specific needs.

As a researcher, it was important to assess my understanding and biases toward homeschooling. Many times, I had to withhold judgment until I was able to read and comprehend the complete texts written by other scholars. Good scholars should also protect their sources from harm and shield the identities of their participants (Rudestam & Newton, 2014). When conducting homeschooling research, it was tempting to make generalizations about homeschoolers, but it is an audience that cannot be easily defined or grouped into categories (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2018). It was essential to bracket or set aside feelings, biases, or opinions so that I could gain information from the participants as they experienced it.

When researchers try to seek or to define something that is not entirely understood or documented, they may run the risk of making false assumptions (Rudestam & Newton, 2014). As a researcher, it was essential for me to retrace events or to make

several reflections throughout this study. Some of my perspectives toward homeschooling changed while doing this research. Glesne (2011) also pointed out in her book, *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*, that, “Two people doing the same [research] would [not] have the same personal responses” (p. 153). This particular study reinforces the importance of homeschooling as an unyielding phenomenon fueled by strong desires from parents/guardians who want to teach their children at home. Not all families teach their children the same way. Even with time, parents/guardians may evolve from their original ideological reasons for homeschooling to following pedagogical reasons (Hanna, 2012).

From the original perspective of the study, it was important to record how my point-of-view changed during the course of this study. Some of the questions I asked myself were,

1. Did I learn something about homeschooling?
2. What were the motivational factors parents/guardians used for homeschooling their children?
3. What resources did homeschooling parents/guardians use?

As a researcher, it was essential for me to reflect on my work periodically so that I could become a competent practitioner seeking potential effect for social changes toward homeschooling.

### **Project Development**

As a learning curriculum developer in a public-school setting, I designed numerous multiple-medium programs using different sources to support unit-studies

programs. As an example, I developed a unit-studies program around the theme of aeronautical science. The plan involved the following subjects: mathematics, science, language arts, literature, and engineering. The project for the aeronautical unit included the development of a hot-air balloon. Students crafted the hot-air balloon by heating several dark plastic trash bags with electric irons.

As a developer, it was necessary to remain focused on the task by anticipating unusual events or conflicts that may occur when planning for project studies. For this particular study, I experienced some challenging moments when conducting interviews with homeschooling participants. There were scheduling delays for the upcoming interviews because of unforeseen events. Based on my willingness and interest in homeschooling, I offered my services to assist parents/guardians in the development of learning programs that may benefit homeschooling families.

Based on the qualitative interpretation, I was able to transcribe what participants' thoughts and experiences were as curriculum developers. Through qualitative interpretation and analysis, I developed a white paper with the intent of assisting THA parents/guardians to consider incorporating the five general themes efficiently (i.e., the importance of family, Bible as the foundation for curriculum building, positive socialization opportunities, real and practical lessons, and a safe learning environment) into their curriculum planning. The white paper (see Appendix E) lists three steps for homeschooling parents/guardians to consider:

1. To list the five general themes from the study.
2. To embed the general themes into the children's curricula.

3. To list sources of good practices from scholars when incorporating the five broad themes.

I will present the findings of the study in one of their planning sessions with a projected month of August 2018. For those members who are not able to attend the proposed planning session, I will use the Internet to ease the accessibility of distributing the white paper. The THA members will determine the value of the white paper and its feasibility and practical use for homeschooling curriculum planning. Therefore, I will use two approaches to release the white paper: (a) in one of their planning sessions, and (b) with the approval of the THA committee, I will use the THA e-mail services with its members. Because the project involved an exhaustive analytic process of revealing the five major themes, it would be beneficial to share the information with other THA members.

The process taught me valuable skills as a qualitative project developer. Based on this study, I can see the potential for developing important curricular programs within the homeschooling communities or support groups. If the research project that I created has a positive influence on the THA members and other unaffiliated homeschooling families, it will only be as a consequence of the meaningful relationships that I experienced with the interviewed families. My experiences as a public-school teacher and curriculum developer helped identify learning resources that would benefit THA members and others who would like to receive the information that will strengthen their curriculum development.



## **Leadership and Change**

As a practitioner, I also gained insight into the importance of leadership and the potential changes that can come from active leadership. From the project, I developed an understanding of the mechanisms used to identify homeschoolers. The task was not easy to accomplish, because homeschooling families are fiercely independent, and they wish to remain anonymous (see Gaither, 2017; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). I learned through the process that it would be better to provide homeschooling families with the tools to succeed while still allowing them the independence and flexibility that they desire when developing their children's learning curricula. I also felt the need to exercise the kind of leadership that allowed for the inclusiveness of all players or participants involved in curriculum planning.

From the collaboration that I shared with homeschooling families, I began to understand the importance of customizing and tailoring learning programs that homeschooling parents/guardians were able to use to meet their children's needs (Duncan, 2012; Wise-Bauer, 2016). I hoped that I would achieve acceptance from THA members and their guests about the benefits of adding the five general themes to their curriculum planning. As a practitioner, I learned the importance of collaborating with my peers when developing, designing, and implementing effective learning programs. My ability to plan curriculum programs improved as a result of this collaboration. Collaboration can serve as a change agent to enable parents/guardians to receive adequate support to become successful curriculum builders for their children. To remain an educational leader for positive change, it is also essential for me to stay abreast with

possible variations or trends that may affect how parents/guardians teach their children, and collaboration can help me to maintain this knowledge of upcoming educational technology.

### **Reflection on Importance of the Work**

The study also revealed the importance of eliciting feedback and input from homeschooling parents/guardians through anecdotal accounts. These anecdotal accounts proved beneficial in finding reasons why parents/guardians teach their children at home and revealed potential methods of working to ensure education quality through collaboration and by meeting with parents/guardians where they are. Until the individual states can develop mechanisms designed to receive homeschooling information from parents/guardians, scholars can only estimate the makeup, population, or characteristics of homeschoolers. Currently, anecdotal accounts are one of the most efficient ways of gathering data about homeschooling families (Murphy, 2012). Quantitative studies tend to come from highly regulated states requiring notifications from parents/guardians who request to homeschool their children (Murphy, 2012).

### **As a Scholar**

The one issue that I identified as essential to address was the lack of Internet use among this population. Within this sample, the interviewed participants limited the use of the Internet because of the potentially harmful influence of outside sources.

Homeschoolers need to find effective ways to incorporate the new technology beyond entertainment to learning relevant, meaningful skills (Walters, 2015). Even the big three textbook publishing companies (Pearson, McGraw-Hill Education, and Houghton Mifflin

Harcourt) are revamping their textbooks to meet the digital requirements from numerous school districts across the United States and to reduce the size and cost of their textbooks (Davis, 2013). This trend may have some influence on homeschooling families because some of the books they purchased are subject-matter textbooks requiring updated digital materials or supplements.

### **As a Practitioner**

From this study, I looked for ways that would incorporate some of the latest findings and best practices in teaching the core subjects of English, mathematics, science, literature, and history. As a practitioner, I examined various practices that will meet the five general themes (i.e., Real and practical curriculum, Family is the center, Safe learning environment, The Bible is the foundation, and Socialization runs through the parents) expressed by the interviewed participants. The attached white paper (Discovering New Methods for Building a Strong Homeschooling Curriculum: How Parents Can Achieve that Objective; see Appendix E) outlined some of the motivational factors that the participants revealed as reasons to homeschool their children. I also listed some of the challenges, resources, and methods used to share their resources with other homeschoolers.

As a practitioner, I placed strong emphasizes in reading, writing, grammar, math, and the need for citizenship to meet the requirements from the state of Texas. With strong emphasizes in the above core subject areas, homeschooling youths will soon become independent learners. I incorporated examples that will do the following, (a) encourage

reading practices, (b) use good grammar skills, (c) make math real, and (d) promote citizenship.

### **As a Project Developer**

Homeschooling families may need to consider using a format that blends both printed text materials with digital learning materials into their children's lesson plans and to lessen their perception of all digital materials as equally corruptible to provide their children with skills required to succeed in their subsequent endeavors. It may be necessary for homeschoolers and homeschooling associations, like THA, to exercise leadership when incorporating new and innovative changes in curricular development that will prepare their children for the digital age (Davis, 2013; Walters, 2015). Identifying this issue was a significant contribution of the work.

Through a series of interviews with homeschooling participants, I was able to reveal some of the homeschoolers' thoughts and views about their roles as homeschool curriculum developers, revealing a lack of collaboration and systematic lesson planning among many participants. Because the ruling of the Supreme Court of Texas in 1994, the parents/guardians were legal to teach their children as long as the curriculum provides reading, math, spelling, grammar, and citizenship (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2015; Texas Education Agency v. Leeper, Texas Supreme Court, 893 S.W.2d 432, 1994). These requirements leave little guidance for homeschooling parents/guardians. Because of the liberalization of policy to homeschool in the state of Texas, it became a challenge for some homeschooling parents/guardians to develop their children's curricula. The state of Texas provided no standard curriculum models to

follow, but only that curricula should include math, grammar, spelling, reading, and citizenship. Even though the study does not lead to the generalizations of homeschooling families in the development of their homeschooling curricula, it does reflect the need to support homeschooling parents/guardians in effective curriculum planning, through initiatives such as the one implemented in this project study.

As a project developer, I was able to design a learning format that encompassed all of the five general themes (i.e., Real and practical curriculum, Family is the center, Safe learning environment, The Bible is the foundation, and Socialization runs through the parents). When developing learning programs, there should be several options to consider because one method may not meet the motivational reasons that parents/guardians may have for homeschooling their children. There are several ways to design effective learning programs, but it is the homeschooling families that determine the educational path of their children based on their learning preferences and talents.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

The project study has implications and applications for positive social change. According to the findings, members of this group were hesitant toward outside influences, including information found on the Internet and through curriculum development sources without biblical implications. As a researcher, it was necessary to find educational sources that will enhance and support the motivational reasons for homeschooling and to support the five general themes (i.e., Real and practical curriculum, Family is the center, Safe learning environment, The Bible is the foundation, and Socialization runs through the parents). There were numerous websites and blogs that

will provide positive social change for parents/guardians who wish to continue to refine or to develop their children's learning curriculum.

For this study, I felt that I had to acknowledge my homeschooling biases and at the same time, I accepted the concept that homeschooling was another effective alternative in educating children. With this understanding, I was able to fit into the homeschooling community with this research with hopes of contributing social, positive change. I was able to elicit more honest responses through the interviews and therefore to gain additional information that was essential to creating useful resources, in particular for the white paper.

Researchers and stakeholders should also consider analyzing the needs of a particular homeschooling group before providing interventions. This practice can help to ensure that the educational sources reach these groups of people, especially in states with little oversight, such as the state of Texas. It was not the goal of this study to seek generalization of homeschooling families who reside in small, rural areas of central Texas, but rather to find and describe the phenomenon that will provide social, positive change (Merriam & Tisdall, 2016). It was tempting to find generalizations from the interviews of 10 homeschooling families, but each of the family representatives had unique stories about their homeschooling experiences. Some common threads or themes were similar to all of the interviewed families (i.e., Real and practical curriculum, Family is the center, Safe learning environment, The Bible is the foundation, and Socialization runs through the parents).

### **Implications From the Study**

Parents/guardians who choose to homeschool their children do so for several reasons. The reasons may range from ideological to pedagogical or to the combination of the two reasons. Homeschooling parents/guardians change over time as supported by the Bronfenbrenner's PCCT model. As an example, in Hanna's (2012) study, *Homeschooling Education: Longitudinal Study of Methods, Materials, and Curricula*, some of the participants changed their views toward their children's homeschooling learning activities. Within a 10-year period (1998–2008), some of the parents/guardians diversified their reasons for homeschooling from ideological to pedagogical reasons (Hanna, 2012). During that same period, parents/guardians began to acquire more textbooks from public and private schools and used tutoring services from public and private institutions. The same diversifications of methods, materials, and curricula occurred with the participants who had several years of homeschooling experiences. Another implication from this study was the increased awareness for networking and sharing of expertise in a homeschooling support group similar to THA.

### **Applications of the Research**

This research had a goal of assisting homeschooling parents/guardians in the planning of their children's curricula. The results of this study indicate that curriculum planning may improve by applying the five general themes (i.e., Real and practical curriculum, Family is the center, Safe learning environment, The Bible is the foundation, and Socialization runs through the parents) extracted from the data in planning lessons for their students. These themes, when applied throughout the parents'/guardians'

planning process, can be beneficial in developing a robust curriculum for their children that will promote social, positive change.

One method of incorporating the five general themes is to include kinesthetic activities (Linksman, 2016). Kinesthetic activities may involve “roleplaying, acting out vocabulary words, and using one’s body to illustrate concepts” (Dean et al., 2012. p. 73). Young children may enjoy moving around, which may develop new neural networking systems for their brains cells that will enhance new learning activities (Linksman, 2016). Kinesthetic activities may also make learning real and practical when developing new neural connections. Even Bible activities may involve youths to roleplay or to illustrate specific biblical scriptures, such as the first chapter of Genesis, which portrays God’s days of creation. Kinesthesia can also be used to promote social gatherings or activities in the area of physical education and recreation (e.g., tennis, soccer, baseball, dance, and musical recitals).

As a teacher, I used the type and order activities to make learning activities real and practical. As an example, in the area of grammar, I used the 1 2 3 4 5 patterns when making sentences. Bruner (2009) illustrated this pattern; Table 10 depicts the interchangeability of the English language.



Table 10

*Interchangeability of the Language Patterns*

Pattern 1	Pattern 2	Pattern 3	Pattern 4	Pattern 5
The	Man	Ate	His	Lunch
A	Lady	Wore	My	Hat
The	Doctor	Gave	the	Shot
My	Son	Lost	His	Keys

When using the 1 2 3 4 5 patterns, children can create different sentences. Examples are:

Pattern 1	Pattern 2	Pattern 3	Pattern 4	Pattern 5
The	son	gave	his	lunch.
My	doctor	lost	my	keys.
A	lady	drove	a	bottle

Following the patterns would keep sentences like, “Doctor my lunch his bottle” from occurring. Homeschooling parents/guardians can incorporate special occasions, like San Jacinto Day, Texas Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, Presidents’ Day, and other special days or events into their children’s learning curricula. These events can encompass all of the five general themes expressed by the interviewed participants. As an example, on San Jacinto Day, the children could role play what took place at San Jacinto on April 21, 1836. The principal actors would portray General Samuel Houston and

General Antonio López de Santa Anna in a fight that lasted just 18 minutes. The minor roles would consist of soldiers on both sides of the battle. The homeschooling students can also draw maps of the Battle of San Jacinto with its battle plans. A homeschooling support group could also plan a field trip to the San Jacinto Monument near LaPorte, Texas. The monument is similar to the Washington Monument. One could propose the following questions:

1. Which monument is taller?
2. By how much?
3. When were the monuments built?
4. Is San Jacinto Monument taller than the Ericsson Globe?

One can answer these questions by using the Internet address of *Purely Facts* (<http://www.puperlyfacts.com>).

### **Directions for Future Study**

If future researchers attempt to expand the body of research regarding homeschooling issues, they should consider a broader population base, much like Ray's (2018) population study on homeschooling. Ray used the following sources, (a) the sales of individual learning packages purchased by homeschooling parents/guardians; (b) surveys from selected states requiring homeschooling notification; (c) surveys made from known homeschooling support groups; and (d) past pertinent studies from the U.S. Department of Education, including the U.S. Census Bureau. Researchers reported that the homeschooling community is still diverse and that it may be impossible to generalize findings (Gaither, 2017; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013; Ray, 2018).

In this study, all of the interviewed participants except one were White Christians. The exception was the Hispanic mother. There is a growing change in the ethnic make-up of families (Ray, 2018); thus, this study lacked racial diversity, as is the case with much of homeschooling literature (see Murphy, 2012, 2014). Future researchers should attempt to use a more racially diverse sample with more extensive samples from regulated states requiring notifications from homeschooling families based on the ethnicity of different origins.

Another concern about homeschooling research studies is the small samplings used by most researchers (Murphy, 2012). It is difficult to find representative samples that reflect the overall homeschooling population (Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). Murphy (2014) claimed that most research studies on homeschooling were anecdotal accounts or narratives from parents/guardians who teach their children at home. The present study replicated this problem. The study was limited to anecdotal accounts.

With broader samples, I would recommend the use of a highly structured, standardized interview system that would allow the participants to respond to questions or statements by using a 4- or 5-point Likert scale (Creswell, 2008, 2009). One of the disadvantages of using a highly structured, standardized interview system is that some participants may not possess or share a common vocabulary interpreted the same way by all respondents (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). A way of minimizing some of the disadvantages of a highly structured interview is to use terms or definitions that are understandable by all of the participants (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Merriam and

Tisdale (2016) noted that this information may be useful in gaining necessary, widespread data from a large population base.

Another recommendation is to include the ethnographic methods of qualitative research. Ethnographic methods involve descriptive means to describe the main, significant points of the target audience (Miles et al., 2014). When using this approach, researchers must examine the “nuances and embedded meanings” of every single word, visual experience, voice pattern, contextual clue, and document to foresee the possible outcome of the studies (Miles et al., 2014, p. 8). Research of this kind will take time and patience to assemble all of the possible artifacts used for the study, but hopefully, in the conclusion of the study, some truths or grounded theory will result (Saldaña, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of the project study was to reveal the motivational factors for homeschooling with secondary considerations in the area of curriculum development, to list learning resources emphasizing good homeschooling practices, and to provide a forum for sharing this information with other homeschoolers. The interviews of 10 homeschooling parents from 10 separate families underscored the importance of family, real and practical education, positive social events, Christian values, and safety.

From the interviews, all of the participants expressed that homeschooling was not an easy task to develop a learning curriculum for their children. In the study, one mother purchased learning programs on CDs for her son thinking that the learning programs would help her son to master essential subjects in mathematics, language arts, history, and science. Another parent stated succinctly, “It is difficult to build a learning program

for my children, but with the help of others, I can do this.” One father stated that not all parents/guardians “teach their children or to develop their learning curriculum the same way.”

The research project intended to assist a local homeschooling group in identifying their motivational factors for homeschooling. Most of the parents/guardians attending THA exhibited strong Christian faith. Their ceremonies on Fridays for two semesters of 16-week periods show proof of their committed faith. All of the parents/guardians expressed the importance of reading, writing, grammar, math, and citizenship, which fulfill the state of Texas’ requirement for homeschooling. The homeschooling households also expressed the importance of positive social skills with their children when dealing with people young and old and with their peers. Homeschooling parents/guardians expressed the need for flexible and engaging content with their children (see Wise-Bauer, 2016). They also had ideological concerns about the importance of extending their Christian faith into their children’s learning curricula.

To meet this group’s needs, I developed a white paper emphasizing these concerns. I was able to truncate a long list of motivational factors into five general themes (i.e., Real and practical education, Family is the center, The Bible is the foundation, Socialization runs through the parents, and Safe learning environment). During the creation of the white paper, I considered the themes that emerged from the qualitative interviews carefully to promote adoption. The study has implications and applications for leadership and future research. The study also promotes social change by providing resources to homeschooling parents/guardians designed to assist them to build

a sound curriculum based on the five general themes. The five general themes expressed by this study can also serve as a vessel designed to guide or to assist homeschooling parents/guardians to peruse their learning resources to meet their children's educational needs.

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### Appendix A: Research Approval

My approval number to allow me to interview my participants was 11-14-14-0179423 for the doctoral study, and I have received an extension. The approval page will be inserted once the project is complete.

## Appendix B: Research Flyer

**Research Volunteers Needed**

Are you a homeschooler?

If yes, I am looking for participants to share their experiences as homeschooling curriculum developers.

To participate in the study, you must be a homeschooler, over the age of 18 years old and is currently homeschooling at least one child.

If you are interested in becoming a participant and that you do meet the above requirements, please contact

Vance Bradford at XXX or [XXX@yahoo.com](mailto:XXX@yahoo.com)

The study includes a one-on-one interview that will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Participants will be asked to sign an informed consent form, and that you will receive a copy of the informed consent form. All interviews will be confidential and held in locations convenient for the participants.

Homeschooling Advertisement Placed in Local Newspaper

**Homeschoolers Needed!**

My name is Vance Bradford, and I am a student of Walden University. I am looking for parents who would like to share their experiences as homeschooling curriculum developers for their children. If you are interested in becoming a participant for an interview, please call me at XXX or email me at [XXX@yahoo.com](mailto:XXX@yahoo.com). Participants will be asked to sign an informed consent form, and that all interviews will be confidential.

The study is completely voluntary. The study is a qualitative case study.

## Appendix C: The Interview Guide

### Interviewer Opening Remarks:

Thank you for allowing me to interview you today. I will ask you a series of questions about your homeschooling experiences. Some of the issues are broader than others so that you can interject ideas that may be useful for the project. Please feel free to express your ideas or issues concerning your homeschooling experiences.

At times, I may ask you to elaborate on some of your comments so that I may understand what you mean. Our interview will be audio-recorded, and I will take notes during our conversation. There will be times that I will ask you to repeat some of your issues or thoughts that I wish to write as quotes.

You are free to decline any question. In some cases, you may have to give your “best thoughts or guesses” on certain questions. This would be acceptable because I am not looking for specific responses. I am only interested in what you have to share about your homeschooling experiences.

Now, are there any questions before we get started? The first series of questions concerning how you came to homeschooling your children and what reasons for choosing to homeschool as an alternative to public or private schools.

### Begin the Interview with Demographic Information:

Who is the primary homeschooling teacher of your children? Is there a secondary teacher in the family?

What is the gender/ages of all children who are homeschoolers in your family?

How many years of homeschooling your child(ren)?

### Introduction to Homeschooling:

How were you introduced to homeschooling?

Who encouraged you to homeschool your children?

### Experiences as Homeschoolers:

How did you prepare to teach your child(ren) at home?

Who assisted you in homeschooling?



Was there a homeschooling orientation that you attended before you decided to homeschool?

How do you deal with people's negative views toward homeschooling?

Has your views or methods changed since you started homeschooling your children? If so, how?

#### Homeschooling Resources and Materials

What teaching methods do you subscribe to when homeschooling your child(ren)? If you need clarification about teaching methods, please ask.

What resources, materials, textbooks, or other documents do you use in developing your child(ren)'s curricula? Do you consider other factors like moral values or character development when planning your curricula? If so, how do you incorporate those factors when planning your curricula?

Are you a member of a homeschooling support group? If yes, is there any benefits or skills that you received from membership?

To what grade do you plan to homeschool your child(ren)?

Do you use tutors to assist you in certain subjects? If yes, what subjects?

Do you use online resources when developing your child(ren)'s learning curriculum? If yes, what Internet sources do you use?

Do you share your resources and learning materials with other homeschooling households?

#### Child(ren)'s Participation:

At what age will you allow your child(ren) to assist you in planning their learning curricula?

In planning your child(ren)'s learning curricula, do you purchase pre-packaged learning programs?

How do you meet the needs of your child(ren)'s academic and social needs?

#### Support Groups:

How do you stay informed about homeschooling?

Are homeschooling support groups beneficial in planning your homeschooling activities?

Do you feel that you can provide a quality homeschool learning environment without the assistance of support groups?

Educational Levels of the Parents:

What is your educational level?

GED

High School Grad

College Hours

College Grad

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Any Additional Questions?

Are there questions or concerns not addressed during this interview?

Conclusion:

Thank you for sharing your time.

## Appendix D: Field Notes

## Field Notes on Family 1

Date: Tuesday, December 12, 2014

Time: 1:30 PM

Location: Home

The mother of five children was the primary teacher. They live in a two-story yellow house approximately 8 or 9 miles from the nearest town. The house had a large barn about a hundred feet from the house. The barn has the traditional red-barn color with white trim.

The family has been homeschooling for 16 years. They started homeschooling since the birth of their first child.

The children live in the upstairs area of the house. The master bedroom is on the first floor. The house has a large panel TV that is hooked up with a satellite dish. The family has two computers, but they are not Internet connected. If the children want to use the Internet, they will drive to a nearby restaurant for Wi-Fi connection. One of the children had complained to his parents about not having Internet services, but the parents are holding out from having Internet services.

The mother teaches much the same way as her teachers did in her public-school days. She uses the traditional approach of teaching her children, but she utilizing her older children to assist the younger ones with their studies. The oldest son helped his mother in developing his learning curriculum from year-to-year.

The father teaches the children the importance of doing chores on the farm. He claims that they have too many animals that require their care and that the animals cannot do this on their own except when they are grazing. Every four or five weeks, the fence needs attention and the whole family participant in mending the fences.

The family has numerous chickens in the fenced area for their protection. They inspect the hen houses for new eggs. The mother is proud that they produce organic eggs for the neighbors.

Both parents are high school graduates, but the mother plans to take some college courses to become a writer. She said, "This family has a lot to write about from their experiences as homeschoolers."

When we finished our interview, I thanked both the mother and father for their time. The mother did most of the talking, and the father was there for support.

Field Notes on Family 2  
Date: December 17, 2014  
Time: 7:30 PM  
Location: Home

The mother of two children is the primary teacher of her children. The husband is the secondary teacher when he has time. Her husband is a truck driver, and he is mostly out of town on various job sites. The husband was in the house when I came by to interview his wife. He was watching Fox News that included the *O'Reilly Factor* and *The Kelly's Files*. We interviewed in the kitchen. The son has not returned from his part-time job, and her daughter was practicing on her guitar. The mother offered a bottle of water or soda. I declined. Once the interview was over, we looked at the study room, and her daughter was still practicing her guitar. Her daughter stopped momentarily to introduce ourselves. After the interview was over, I waved to the husband and said that we were through. He just waved back.

The family lives in a comfortable house located in a small town, and their place is within walking distance of an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school. The family had some issues with their son's speech impediment, and the family chose to seek services from a private practitioner for their son's speech impediment. The public school can provide speech services for at least two days out of the week, but she was willing to seek professional services in Austin. The son's impediment has diminished over the last few years.

One of the drills suggested by the private practitioner was to have her son to read orally on a daily basis. The mother felt that her son would not receive this kind of attention in the public schools. Currently, the son works in a local auto-parts shop in town, and the mother claims he has become a natural problem-solver at the store.

The mother stresses reading in her family. Her son is required to read directions of every product sold at the auto-parts store. The customers feel confident when her son sells goods and replacement parts to them based on his knowledge of cars and trucks.

Her daughter loves music, and she hopes to make a career out of singing and playing the guitar. The mother hopes that her daughter will become a gospel singer.

The mother uses the traditional school approach when teaching her children. She has organized an empty room into a study room. Each child has a place in the study room to do their work. They do keep a journal of the things they have done for each day, and they know that their journals play an important role when planning their education.

Both parents are high school graduates from the 1990s.

### Field Notes on Family 3

Date: Monday, January 5, 2015

Time: 2:00 PM

Location: Home

The interviewed participant lived about 11 miles from the nearest community. She is the primary teacher of her three children. The mother shared with me that her daughter felt rushed in public schools, and there were too many interruptions with the classes. It was at that time that she decided that homeschooling would be a better option with her daughter. After teaching her daughter, she noticed improvements. Her daughter loves to read, and now she can read books without interruptions.

Penmanship is important with the family. All of the children know how to write their letters in cursive. While writing, the children, especially the twins, practiced their spelling words and correct the grammar mistakes. The oldest daughter will usually correct her brothers' spelling and grammar mistakes. The children have their school desks purchased from a surplus store. Each desk has reams of writing a paper and the children have their fountain pens for letter writing.

The family had a large dictionary on a large table located in the middle of the study room. The mother has also purchased a few sets of reference books for the children to use.

The mother plans her children's learning curriculum to include penmanship, reading, spelling, grammar, and math. She teaches her classes in the morning hours. She incorporates unit studies with her lessons by combining primary subjects like reading, writing, spelling, and math to teach a particular theme. One of the favorite magazines is the *National Geographic*. In the study room, there were pictures of animals and flowers depicting body and plant parts.

The one rule that is stressed is that each child must return things in their right places. The children do share a microscope in the study room, and it is currently used by the children.

During the interview, the mother expressed herself openly, and she appears proud of her accomplishment as a homeschooler. She is especially proud of her daughter. The mother stated, "I believe she will be a good teacher."

Both parents appear to be active members of the 4-H organization and their church. Her husband collects old coins and different kinds of rifles. They both support the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The living room had some Texas A&M artifacts, as well.

Field Notes on Family 4

Date: Monday, January 13, 2015

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Home

I arrived at the participant's rural cottage approximately seven miles from my home. The primary teacher is a mother of two children; one son, 7-years old, and a daughter 5-years old. The couple left Kansas for a job position in Texas.

The cottage had both a porch around three sides of the house with a detached garage. The place had a main gate entry with a large arched opening surrounded by cactuses.

We began the interview in the living room. The mother asked if I would like coffee or something. I decline. I noticed that the room was clean with a smell of fresh scent. The children were in the kitchen doing their lessons on the kitchen table. The mother was able to make "eye contact" with the children. I felt that the mother had instructed her children to behave well while we were doing the interview. The children did not interrupt us at any time. They appear to be busy.

The mother seemed confident throughout our interview. After the interview, she shared some of her recently purchased books from a local garage sale. About a few years ago, the mother bought some old textbooks from a retired schoolteacher, and she was very proud of the purchase. The living room had a panel TV hooked to a satellite dish, but it was not on at the moment. It was a large panel TV. After the interview, I asked about the TV. She said that her husband likes to watch sports, especially the Kansas State Wildcats.

When I asked how they began homeschooling, the mother stated that there were some issues with her son's learning ability. The mother felt that her son needed more attention, so she considered homeschooling as a way of helping her son. In 2012, the family transferred to the state of Texas. The only thing that she would change is the weather. She missed her Kansas weather. She loved the four seasons of weather.

On the small place, there were a few horses. On the weekends, she and her husband would ride their horses around the place for relaxation.

The mother was pleased with her choice to homeschool their children. She stated that it was easier to homeschool in Texas, and she indicated that the homeschool support group was a great help in making the transition from public schools to homeschooling her children.

### Field Notes on Family 5

Date: Tuesday, January 13, 2015

Time: 9:40 AM

Location: Home

The father, a secondary homeschooling teacher, represented his family for the interview, and he is Hispanic with a Caucasian wife. He is currently a police officer in a small town of 5,000 people between Austin and Houston, Texas. The family has three children, and the father was prior service.

From all the interview I conducted, he was the first person to use the term “government schools.” He felt that “government schools” did not provide the kind of education that his children need. It lacked Christian beliefs.

In the transition, away from “government schools,” both the father and mother knew that one of them had to stay home. The mother decided that she would be the stay-at-home person for the children. Once he completed his obligation with the U.S. Army, he became interested in law enforcement. He first served as a security police officer in a nearby two-year college campus. He is now a police officer in a rural city.

The family lives in a doublewide, prefabricated home with a detached garage. At the time of the interview, his assigned patrol car was in the driveway. He was to report for work at 1:00 P.M. for work.

The mother has gone grocery shopping with the oldest daughter. He is taking care of his youngest sons. They were cleaning house to include laundry. The boys continue working around the house while the father took time for the interview. I felt that I had to complete the interview quickly so they can complete their chores. For this interview, we have known each other for approximately 12 years. We both go to the same church together. It appears that the family just completed breakfast. I noticed that the stacked dishes on the kitchen cabinet and that the dishwashing machine was full. With the humming of the dishwasher, we began our interview.

In the interview, the father stated, “It is important to start the day with prayer and scripture reading from the Bible.” He gave his wife credit for getting the children ready for learning. It is a good thing because his police duties were busy ones, in particular on the weekends and evening shifts. The police officer appears physically fit, and he seems to enjoy baseball. There were some trophies near the kitchen area of the house.

The father’s speaking skills were remarkable. After the interview, he showed me his library room. It was full of classic literature. He stated that one of his favorite books was *Ivanhoe*, by Sir Walter Scott. The father is also a member of the History Club; a club that provides readers with monthly book selections for ordering. His readings consisted of

books about the Civil War, the Revolutionary War, and Texas history. His children have taken on the same interests of book selections.

It was about 10:45 A.M. when the mother and her daughter entered the house, and she asked if we were through. I said, "Yes, ma'am. Your husband was showing his selection of books in the library." The wife retorted, "Yes, I am afraid my husband would lead you to this part of the house. It is the one room that occupies most of our time." I thanked the police officer for his time, and I complimented the two boys for their hard work around the house.

When I left the house, I just could not get over how well the children behaved during the interview. It was a good feeling.



## Field Notes on Family 6

Date: Friday, January 16, 2015

Time: 10:30 AM

Location: City Library

The father was the primary participant for the interview, but he considers himself as a secondary teacher for his children. His wife is the primary teacher, but she was not present for the interview. The father wore slacks with a long-sleeve, plaid shirt. His hair neatly trimmed, and he was former military. The father was rigid with unbending features when he seated in the library conference room. His back was straight, and the hands were clasped together when listening to questions. Once the questions began, he will use his hands to create gestures while he is responding to the questions. As an example, he would use his fingers to illustrate the number of children in his family. The index finger was his oldest son; the second finger, his oldest daughter; the third finger, his next son; and finally, the fourth finger, his youngest son. The other gesture he used was the outreaching of his hands in illustrating two basic ideas or concepts between public schools and homeschooling families. On the one hand, he illustrated the problems and challenges of public schools in regards to bullying and violence, and on the other hand to illustrate the advantages of homeschooling as a place where parents can protect their children. Toward the end of this comparison between public and home schools, he stated, "Tragedies can place at any time, but in our support group, we have a policy that at least one parent must stay with her [or with his] kids during the day when we have support group day training."

The father felt that homeschooling their children was a unique calling from God, and it is important for children to respect their parents. In the selection of books and texts, the father underscored the importance of using textbooks that will support their classical training for their children. The family has purchased the entire set of *McGuffey's Readers* for their children to use. The father teaches them Latin to gain an understanding of English grammar. His wife reads chapter books in the evening hours to the children before bedtime.

The father also shares his interests of semantic theology with his children by "breaking" down the Bible into scriptures that will guide them. He shared the importance of memorizations of biblical scriptures.

In the area of computer expertise, he has developed several online programs designed to assist children in other families with their homework in Western Civilization. The children would sign on each day, and on Friday of each week of the school semester, he would go over the assignments with the students.

He stated in the area of standardized testing; it is essential to know what your children have accomplished and what they need to learn. With his hand gestures, he explained how children learn, and he stressed that all children would not learn at the same levels. Some children learn things very fast, and some children may progress slowly. There are

times when children may make dramatic shifts in their learning potential. He illustrated how his oldest son who had little or minimum reading abilities when tested, but in the following year, his reading abilities increased to several years.

In the area of social needs, the father accentuated the need for children to socialize beyond their social peers. He stressed the point that public schools placed students into groups and that this process of placing students into groups will not prepare students to work with children with wide and different ages. He stated, "In life when you try to get a job, you will not always work with people who are within a year or two of your age."

The father received his college degree while he served in the U.S. Army while stationed in Texas.

Field Notes on Family 7

Date: Friday, January 30, 2015

Time: 4:45 PM

Location: Support Group at church

I interviewed the mother at the church library. The mother and her son drive approximately 19 miles to attend the Friday's support group classes. Her son had some medical issues, but he appeared to function well in all of his classes at the support group. The mother expressed her unwavering support for the homeschooling support group. The mother was neatly dressed, and she appeared relaxed during the interview. The mother is Hispanic, and she did struggle with her English. At times, she would ask for clarifications with some of the terms used in the interviews. When I asked her about her son's test results, her response was positive. She stated, "My son knows more than his friends. How do you say... excuse my language." I responded, "That is all right. Let me see if I can try to clarify what you are trying to say. You stated that when your son pursues his interest in things he wants to do, he gains more knowledge. The mother's response was, "Yes, he gains more knowledge that way."

Her sentences were simple and unpretentious. She is confident that her son will get a good education through the homeschooling support group. She felt that her son is doing more learning activities than he would have if he attended public schools. Her son is a principal character in an upcoming drama in late May 2015.

Toward the end of the interview, the mother stated that she attended college, but she did not graduate. I asked if she has plans to continue her education. Her response was, "No, since I have two kids now, and there is no time for school."

## Field Notes on Family 8

Date: Saturday, February 17, 2015

Time: 9:00 PM

Location: Home

The home of Family 8 is a spacious house, and from my estimation, the house had at least 3,500 square feet of living space. This estimate came from the fact that I once a “roofer” who installed or replaced roofing materials on people’s homes. They lived about 12 miles from the nearest home, and I arrived at 8:50 AM., both parents greeted me at the front door. We proceeded to the kitchen area of the house. The house had high ceilings with slow revolving fans. The kitchen area had a kitchen island with high chairs surrounding the island. They offered coffee. I accepted their offer. While we were discussing the coolness of the weather, the husband nodded and mentioned that the weather was a little unusual for this time of the year in Central Texas.

After sipping on the coffee, we began the interview process. The primary teacher [the mother] gleaned with fondness about her sons. Two have graduated from college, and the youngest will be a homeschool graduate in the spring of this year. The husband nodded with approval. The mother spoke with lots of enthusiasm about their roles as homeschooling parents. In our interview, the mother used a lot of biblical reasons for teaching their children. She felt that she and her husband were convicted to homeschool their children. She referenced a particular book [*The Hand That Rocks the Cradles Rules the World*] that had changed their family’s lives. Her eyes were intense when she stated, “[It is the] communism’s goal ... to separate children from their parents so the state government can have sole influence and control of its citizens.” The husband nodded in agreements.

I noticed a grand piano in the living room, and there were other musical instruments, too. All of their sons played at least one musical instrument. The oldest played the piano, guitar, and violin. There were also numerous pictures of the family on the living room wall. On the fireplace mantle, several trophies were depicting their sons’ athleticism in basketball and baseball. The parents also had pictures of their sons’ performances in various musical recitals.

The one area that the mother stressed is the lack of socialization for homeschoolers. She stated in strong terms that this was a myth. On that subject, she raised her voice with emphasis. She both hands was embraced when describing the various social events that they have sponsored as homeschooling parents. In summary, she indicated that homeschooling is challenging, and it requires a great deal of work, but socialization is a big myth.

Field Notes on Family 9

Date: Friday, March 14, 2015

Time: 3:00 PM

Location: Home

I arrived at the participant's house at approximately 2:45 P.M. and the whole family was there. The house had a picket fence in both the front and back yard for their pets. We went to the back of the house with an attached screen porch. The mother had a pitcher of tea with several small desserts. The screen porch had a small ceiling fan. The rear sliding door led to the kitchen area of the house.

After sharing pleasantries and introductions of the family, we began our interview. The father and children excused themselves from the interview; they had other things to do. The mother was not shocked by the fact that they were leaving, but she understood that they were near if she needed help. The mother appeared confident throughout the interview process. She and her husband planned on homeschooling their three sons since their marriage. The mother shared their homeschooling experiences with a great deal of zest and passion. She exhorted a great deal of biblical knowledge when addressing the need for parents to teach their children how to behave with other people. She wants her sons to become good stewards of the land and with their money.

While the interview was ongoing, I began to notice how clean the screen porch was, and I began to wonder if the whole house was that way. The backyard was neat, too. The nearby barn had new doors, and the driveway did not have any ruts or holes. It appears that the three sons do many chores around the house. As we were halfway through the interview process, the oldest son began to mow the front yard. The lawnmower's noise did not interfere with our interview, but the mother apologized for the noise. I told her that it was not an issue.

Since the family lived in a rural area, I noticed that there were no satellite or dish-like apparatuses around the house. The family did not have Internet services. If the family had smart or cell phone, they were not in sight.

Toward the end of the interview, the mother appeared show excitement about her sons' growth into manhood, and that she is very proud of them. They are beginning to exercise leadership in their faith. She appeared happy with her choice to homeschool her sons.

As we finished the interview, the oldest son asked if he could mow the backyard. The mother and I just smiled at each other, and I responded, "Yes, we are through, and thank you for asking."

Field Notes on Family 10

Date: Wednesday, March 18, 2015

Time: 7:15 PM

Location: Home

The interviewed parent lived in a modest house out in the country approximately 15 miles from the nearest town. The area is considered grazing county for livestock. The couple has four children; two sons and two daughters ranging from five to 12 years old. They just finished their evening supper. Her husband went into another room to watch TV. The children were in the same room with their father. The children were sitting on the floor with a large circle throw rug playing games.

Before the interview began, the mother, the primary teacher, offered me a glass of tea. I accepted. We began the interview in the living room of the house. It was spacious with a centered fireplace in the middle of the house. During the interview, I felt that the mother was very comfortable throughout the interview process. At times, I felt that the mother had prepared herself for the interview. Her comments were succinct and to the point. She also mentioned that the family prays.

The house was immaculate and organized. I noticed that the children were putting things up when they were through with their games. The father continued watching a news program on TV. The "TV" room had a library section with a built-in desk for writing purposes. The books on the shelves appear to be a set of used encyclopedia, a large dictionary, and other references.

## Appendix E: The Project



**Discovering New Methods for Building a Strong Homeschooling Curriculum:**

**How Parents and Guardians Can Achieve that Objective**

Vance Bradford | [vancebradford@waldenu.edu](mailto:vancebradford@waldenu.edu)  
June 2018

## **Introduction**

This white paper and the recommendations contained herein are the results of a qualitative study of 10 homeschooling families who resided in the central area of the state of Texas. The paper shares background related to homeschooling in the state of Texas and includes strategies for homeschooling parents/guardians to optimize their use and integration of homeschool curriculum. The study provided the basis for these recommendations by using four fundamental questions:

- What motivational factors did parents/guardians use in the development of their children's learning curriculum?
- What challenges did parents/guardians face in the development of homeschooling curriculum?
- What learning resources did homeschooling parents/guardians use in the small, rural six-county area of Texas?
- How do parents/guardians share their learning resources with other homeschooling households?

The purpose of the white paper was twofold: (a) to share resources for effective curriculum planning based on qualitative research findings among homeschooling parents/guardians in the state of Texas and (b) to provide strategies whereby homeschooling parents/guardians can incorporate the five general themes extracted from the study data (i.e., Real and practical curriculum, Family is the center, Safe learning environment, The Bible is the foundation, and Socialization runs through parents) into learning curricula.



The five general themes came from interviews conducted in late winter 2015. The primary objective was to implement good teaching practices, curriculum development, and social venues shared by 10 interviewed homeschooling participants. In the state of Texas, homeschooling parents/guardians must include reading, grammar, spelling, math, and citizenship in their children's curricula. In meeting those requirements, it was the parents'/guardians' responsibilities to find ways to implement these requirements. One of the concerns expressed by the interviewed participants was to make learning real and practical in a safe learning environment. The other findings also suggested that education must be biblically based and family-centered with socially accepted standards. These issues laid the groundwork for the proposed recommendations for appropriate curriculum development.

### **Developing a Homeschooling Curriculum**

While planning a homeschooling learning program in the state of Texas, the following information should be noted (Becker & Kummer, 2015):

1. Parents/guardians do not need to inform school district officials that they plan to homeschool their children;
2. Homeschooling parents/guardians do not need to possess teaching certificates to teach their children;
3. Homeschooling families do not need to have their homeschooling curricula evaluated from public school or state authorities; and
4. There are no homeschool visits within the state of Texas.

### **Homeschooling Within the State of Texas**

The state of Texas requires the following courses of all students: grammar, reading, writing, spelling, math, and citizenship. The 17th Court of Tarrant County, Texas (Leeper v. Arlington Independent School, 1987) further issued that homeschooling parents/guardians must teach these courses in a genuine or real manner by using a written curriculum containing both visual and written lessons.

There are numerous ways to develop children's learning curriculum, but homeschooling parents/guardians must consider the following factors (Weldon, 2010):

- acceptable education philosophies,
- available learning resources,
- the maturity of the children, and
- the academic requirements from the states.

Even though Texas required a limited number of subjects for homeschooling parents/guardians to teach, they must find creative ways to combine these subjects in holistic ways. For example, literacy is the capacity to produce mental impressions, images, and thoughts with the intent to improve understanding (Sibberson & Szymusiak, 2013). One way of creating mental images was using specific words that would increase visualizations of the contents (Sammons, 2013). Homeschooling parents/guardians who use classical education emphasized the importance of reading and spelling before pursuing complex analytical work in other subjects (Wise-Bauer, 2016; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2009, 2016). Based on the interviews, all of the interviewed participants developed their own children's learning curricula. Some of the interviewed participants used

different methods in hopes of finding the teaching materials that would meet their children's interests and specific needs that may include hearing or visual impairments and physical or learning disabilities. When meeting the academic and social needs of children, homeschooling parents/guardians should have a specific learning curriculum for every subject taught for each school year (see Weldon, 2010).

**Question 1: What motivational factors did parents/guardians use in the development of their children's learning curriculum?**

One of the reasons some families began homeschooling was for ideological reasons. Some homeschooling parents/guardians believe that it is a moral imperative to integrate Christian values into their children's learning activities (see Kunzman, 2009; Murphy, 2012; Walters, 2015). Families with strong Christian beliefs or doctrine feel that God placed special trust on them to provide the kind of education that promotes high moral values (Kunzman, 2009; Kunzman & Gaither, 2013). Homeschooling "permits parents [and guardians] to reproduce their spiritual way of life in their children" (Murphy, 2012, p. 89). Kunzman (2009) further indicated that the *Holy Bible* served as the scaffolding reference for all of the required subjects of grammar, writing, spelling, mathematics, history, science, art, and music. Though strong religious-based motivations remain significant, they may diminish over time because of increased pedagogical reasons (Bielick, 2008; Hanna, 2012).

Another reason some parents/guardians chose homeschooling was the lack of quality in both public and private schools. Included in this rationale was the claim that adverse learning environments may also result in reduced performance in public schools

(Murphy, 2012). Progressive education that includes new math and whole language reading caused some homeschooling parents/guardians to remove their children from public or private schools that sponsored those kinds of interventions (Gaither, 2008). Murphy (2012) also shared concerns that some parents/guardians felt their children were facing the appearance of declining academic standards from both public and private schools. Based on the reasons for homeschooling, it is clear that homeschooling parents/guardians wish to provide morally strong, rigorous education for their children. As discussed below, the findings from a qualitative study among homeschooling families in the state of Texas also supported the need for a morally-centered, rigorous education. The following solution provides a method for implementing such a program while maintaining educational standards and meeting the requirements of the state of Texas.

**Question 2: What challenges did parents/guardians face in the development of homeschooling curriculum?**

One theme became paramount with this research question: safe learning environment. All of the interviewed participants mentioned creating a safe environment. The interviewed participants also cited that bullying is a primary concern in public schools, but they did not witness any bullying from their children. Tyler Clementi Foundation (2018) claimed that at least 28 % of U.S. students in most public schools had experienced bullying that led to bodily injuries or verbal abuses among students. With some exceptions, most of the interviewed participants expressed concerns about school violence, and it was an important factor in choosing to homeschool their children. The interviewed participants focused on providing protection and safety for their children.

One of the interviewed parents stated, “Tragedies can take place at any time, but in our support group, we have a policy that parents must stay with their children during” Friday sessions. The same parent also remarked, “We simply knew this was the thing to do. I want our children to have a safe place to learn.”

**Question 3. What learning resources did homeschooling parents/guardians use in a small, rural area of the State of Texas?**

This question revealed that the Bible was the foundation in of all of the subjects taught inside and outside the homes of the interviewed participants. Each of the interviewed families wanted to do biblical training to become a large part of their children’s learning curricula to ensure that the children will value their Christian faith and that all of their subject materials contain Christian principles.

**Question 4: How do parents/guardians share their learning resource with other homeschooling households?**

The theme associated with this question was Socialization runs through parents. The participants were eager to exchange information with other homeschooling parents/guardians. All of the interviewed participants talked about the importance of socialization. They were also emphatic in rejecting the idea that homeschooled children lack social skills. Each of the interviewed participants talked about the varied activities their children participated in when it came to sports, drama, field trips, scouting activities, 4-H projects with livestock animals, and events through their homeschooling support group or church. In each of these above events, both parents/guardians and children learn to interact with others. In all of these events, homeschool families share their thoughts

and learning resources with other families. One of the essential activities for homeschoolers is park days. Park days allows both parents/guardians and their children to go to a local park for the adults to plan for future learning sessions while their children play in the park with other children.

### **State Homeschooling Regulations**

The state of Texas is one of 10 states (Alaska, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, and New Jersey) that does not require parents/guardians to notify their local school districts that they plan to homeschool their children (Home School Legal Defense Association, 2015). Texas specified homeschooling parents/guardians to teach the following courses to their children, math, grammar, reading, spelling, writing, and citizenship (Williams, 2013). Williams (2013) compared homeschooling to uncertified private schools, and if parents/guardians who wish to enroll or re-enroll in public schools, they must show documented evidence of their child(ren)'s academic performance. If documents are old or lacking, the school districts can apply appropriate assessments.

### **Meeting the State of Texas' and Other States' Educational Requirements**

Kunzman and Gaither (2013) claimed curricula must have particular outcomes with specific objectives. Parents/guardians who reside in Texas should outline the required courses needed when developing their children's learning curriculum within the state, which includes reading, grammar, spelling, mathematics, and citizenship. Documentation remains essential even if the homeschooling parents/guardians may not choose the option of enrolling or re-enrolling their children into public schools. In the

event that homeschooling families move to other states that have strict homeschooling regulations, then the parents/guardians must consider documenting their children's academic grade-levels in English grammar, math, reading, and other subject areas.

### **Strong Emphasis on Reading**

When homeschooling parents/guardians develop a learning curriculum with strong emphasis on reading, math, grammar, and writing, their children will soon become independent learners (Diller, 2016; Wise-Bauer, 2016). As students perform well in reading, writing, and mathematics, they could pursue their education with fewer directions from their parents/guardians (Diller, 2016; Layne, 2015; Messner, 2015; Weldon, 2012; Wise-Bauer, 2016; Wise-Bauer, S., & Wise, J., 2016). Messner (2015) stated, “[M]ost avid readers find writing easier than those who read less” (p. 28). Layne (2015) claimed that when parents/guardians read aloud to their children, they increase their linguistic skills, vocabulary strength, and fluency in reading with enhanced pronunciation skills. Approximately 30 years before Layne made his claim about reading, Anderson, Hielbert, Scott, and Wilkerson (1985) cited in their landmark study, “The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children” (p. 23). Layne further encouraged parents/guardians and teachers to place a “Do Not Disturb!” sign when reading to children (p. 27). In short, reading is the key to “self-improvement” (Wise-Bauer, 2016, p. 16).

### **Stress Writing and Grammar Skills**

In the area of writing, parents/guardians should consider making writing models for their children to use when writing to their friends (Diller, 2016; Messner, 2015). It is

essential to divide the writing process into meaningful parts to make writing a less daunting task (Diller, 2016; Messner, 2015). Model writing may include picture books with a list of questions, parts of an essay writing (e.g., introduction, main points or parts from the introduction, and a conclusion or summary), or incomplete writings from individual writers requiring additional input from the children.

As a teacher, I used type and order activities to make learning activities real and practical. As an example, in the area of grammar, I used the 1 2 3 4 5 patterns when making sentences. Bruner (2009) illustrated this pattern; Table 1 depicts the interchangeability of the English language.

Table 1

*Interchangeability of the Language Patterns*

Pattern 1	Pattern 2	Pattern 3	Pattern 4	Pattern 5
The	Man	Ate	His	Lunch
A	Lady	Wore	My	Hat
The	Doctor	Gave	the	Shot
My	Son	Lost	His	Keys
Her	Mother	Drank	The	Water



When using the 1 2 3 4 5 pattern, children can create different sentences. Examples are:

Pattern1	Pattern 2	Pattern 3	Pattern 4	Pattern 5
The	son	gave	his	lunch.
My	doctor	lost	my	keys.
A	lady	drove	a	bottle.

The students can create sentences by going through the table diagonally or zigzag patterns by following the 1 2 3 4 5 order. The concept is to avoid sentences, such as “Doctor my lunch his bottle,” from occurring.

### **Make Math Real**

To comprehend basic math skills, parents/guardians must demonstrate to their children how to convert and integrate their language skills into images and symbols that will help them to solve mathematical problems (Diller, 2016). As an example, some parents/guardians or teachers may use the “see-and-say” method (e.g.,  $a + b = c$  means “a plus b equal c” or  $1/10$  of 100 should read, “One-tenth of a hundred equal ten.”; Kress & Fry, 2016). After the language skills are linked with mathematics, the students can then proceed to high-level math that will include extensive notational skills (Holtzman & Susholtz, 2011; Kazemi & Hintz, 2014; Sousa, 2017). In mathematics, children should memorize their multiplication tables that will allow to multiply quickly and to divide double-digit numbers effortlessly (Kazemi & Hintz, 2014). Kazemi & Hintz (2014) suggested children should refrain from the use of calculators when seeking mathematical answers.

Groce, Wilson, and Poling (2013) suggested to associate mathematics into a unit-studies program by conducting a field trip to a local cemetery. The students can work on a longevity study of deceased people buried in the cemetery. Table 2 illustrates a data sheet used by Grose et al. It would be important to ask permission to do a project like this with the local cemetery officials.

Table 2

*Data Sheet for Gravestones*


---

 Your Name\_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Cemetery\_\_\_\_\_

Town/City\_\_\_\_\_

 Name of the stone or  
marker\_\_\_\_\_

A. Year of Date\_\_\_\_\_ Gender F M

B. Year of Death\_\_\_\_\_

 C. Life Span\_\_\_\_\_ ( $A - B = C$ )

E. U.S. veteran YES NO

---

 Note. Groce, Wilson, and Poling (2013) designed the data sheet to assist students to develop a longevity chart from a particular cemetery by gender. The students can also track the number of veterans buried in the cemetery.

Figure 1 shows what a sample of a longevity may look like by using the data sheet from Table 1.

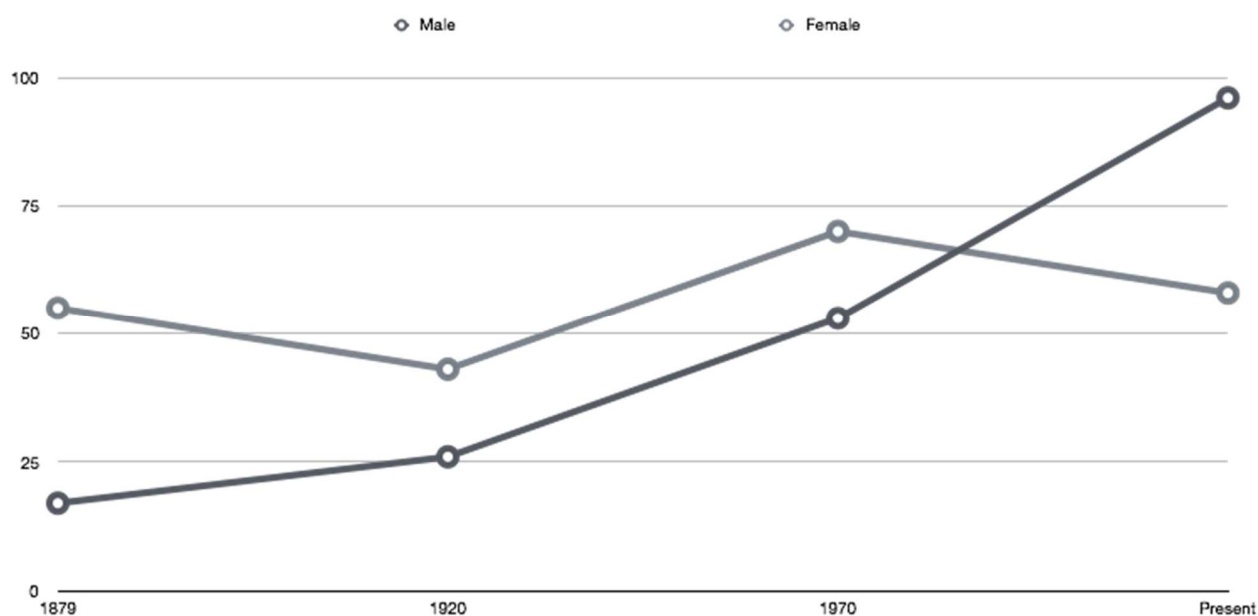


Figure 1. Proposed chart for the longevity project.

Other sources I found useful in developing strong numeracy in mathematics were:

- Collins, A. and Dacey, L. (2011), *The xs and Whys of Algebra: Key Ideas and Common Misconceptions* (Portland, ME, Stenhouse Publisher)
- Collins, A. and Dacey, L. (2014), *It's All Relative: Keys Ideals and Common Misconceptions about Ratio and Proportion, in Grades 6-7* (Portland, ME, Stenhouse Publisher)
- Harris, P. W. (2011), *Building Powerful Numeracy for Middle and High School Students* (Portsmouth, NH, Heinerman Publisher)

Other math sources exist, but I am only familiar with the listed sources and I have reasons to believe that they will be beneficial for homeschooling students. The first source, a flip chart by Collins and Dacey, outlines 30 different models that students can

use in solving algebraic problems. It is also convenient to have the flip chart next to the students as they pursue their assignment in algebra. The second source by the same authors is designed to help students who are struggling with ratio and proportional problems. The third source by Harris assists students in building a strong foundation for numeracy through enhanced mathematical skills without rote memorizations of mathematical tables.

### **Need for Citizenship**

McIntosh (2009) expanded the word citizenship beyond “the city from which the word [citizens] derives, and the state and the nation with which it has also been associated” (p. 385). The concept of global citizens may be difficult to accept when citizenship is defined as a person who has duties and rights within particular geographical boundaries (McIntosh, 2009). In the United States of America, the country has gone from President Obama’s statement, “I am a citizen of the world” to President Trump’s message, “It is time to make America great again” (Ritchie, 2014, para 1). Currently, the Texas Home School Coalition Association has mixed views toward global citizenship training, but the organization has a Good Citizenship Program designed to assist homeschooling families in fulfilling the citizenship requirements for the state of Texas. The program is voluntary. The requirement is to complete 40 hours of volunteer work in the following areas:

- Voter Registration
- Campaign Process
- Political Party Process

- Legislative Process

Homeschooling students can also receive awards for their work toward citizenship training. The citizenship awards consist of the following:

- Alamo Award (to gather new voter registration)
- Ranger Award (to participate in a campaign process)
- Lone Star Award (to participate in a political party process)
- Republic Award (to participate in a legislative process of a local, state, or federal level)

Homeschooling families or support groups can submit the Good Citizenship Reporting Form online with Texas Home School Coalition Association. Homeschooling students or parents/guardians can place these awards in their children's portfolios as evidence of citizenship training.

Another source for citizenship is *The Good Citizen's Handbook: A Guide to Proper Behavior*, by McKnight-Trontz (2001). McKnight-Trontz designed the handbook to be read by upper-elementary or middle-school students. The handbook uses the theme, "It's Your Duty." The theme expands into penmanship, proper respect for authority, cleanliness, the dangers of delinquency, the benefits of cheerfulness, and the importance of physical fitness.

### **Findings of the Study**

The qualitative study revealed five central themes based on the responses of the interviewed participants:

- Real and practical curriculum

- Family is the center
- Safe learning environment
- The Bible is the foundation
- Socialization runs through parents

Overall, the findings suggested that the participants homeschooled primarily to maintain a family-centered, a safe environment, and a religion-based background for their children. Homeschooling also provides opportunities for children to have contact with others outside the homeschooling communities (e.g., Boy Scouts of American, Girl Scouts of America, 4-H Clubs, church organizations, and others). The participants noted the importance of effective curricula delivered in a safe home environment, outside of potentially corrupting influence.

Based on the data collected from the interviews from 2015, a need exists to assist new homeschooling families in the development of their children's learning curricula. The results also apply to those families who have multiple children of different ages. The participants for this project claimed that designing their children's learning curricula was not an easy task. One of the participants claimed that with the help of other homeschoolers, she felt that she could homeschool her children. All of the participants from the project felt that homeschooling was an excellent alternative to public or private schools. The interviewed participants of 2015 also claimed that homeschooling involves extensive planning, collaboration with other parents/guardians, and lots of patience. Development, planning, and implementation of any learning program take time. With a

coherent strategy, parents/guardians can minimize the amount of time spent on curriculum planning.

### **Setting the Right Course**

One of the challenges of building a homeschooling-learning curriculum in the state of Texas is that the state does not offer guidelines, examples, or templates for homeschooling parents/guardians to use for planning their children's learning programs. Identifying learning programs was not easy tasks as indicated by the interviewed participants. Some of the questions that homeschooling parents/guardians may need to ask are as follows (Miser, 2005):

- What are the subjects or topics required?
- What learning materials will benefit all of the subjects taught?
- Are there supporting applications?
- Are the learning materials effectively meeting the children's needs?
- How far will the learning materials extend? Are the learning materials limited to the lower grades?
- Do the learning programs meet the family's budget guidelines?

When addressing the academic and social needs of children, homeschooling parents/guardians should have a specific learning curriculum for every subject taught for each school year (Weldon, 2010; Wise-Bauer, 2016; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016).

The study results suggest that families who homeschool their children do so primarily to maintain a family-centered, safe, and religion-based background.

Parents/guardians will most likely provide active and beneficial socialization with other

families. The study also revealed the importance of parents/guardians to exhibit real and practical curricula that will benefit their children's education. It is essential to exercise collaborative skills when incorporating the five general themes within the homeschooling communities that would develop new and efficient ideas designed to strengthen children's learning curricula.

One method of reducing the time and energy is the use of previously developed curriculum. There are numerous curriculum sources (e.g., Accelerated Christian Education, Alpha Omega, Analytical Grammar, Bob Jones University, Calvert School, Christian Light Education, Math-U-See, Rod and Staff, and other independent school districts) that homeschooling parents/guardians may choose when developing their children's learning curricula (Gaither, 2008; Wise-Bauer & Wise, 2016). With some exceptions, most of the curriculum sources share Christian values, which coincide with beliefs and attitudes of the participants in the study. All of the listed curriculum sources can be modified to include the five general themes expressed by the participants of the 2015 interviews. Gaither (2008) claimed there are "outsiders" not connected to Christian doctrine when developing their recommended homeschooling learning programs (p. 165). The "outsiders" included Linda Dobson, John Holt, Ben Miser, and Raymond and Dorothy Moore. Ray (2010) agreed with Gaither that homeschooling had broad support from both Christian and nonChristian organizations.

Although professionally developed curricula may be useful, Weldon (2010) countered that most parents/guardians when purchasing preplanned learning program from vendors do not "strictly adhere to such materials" (p. 12). Wise-Bauer (2016)



agreed with Weldon's comments. The parents'/guardians' ideological and pedagogical reasons or the maturity of their children may determine how they may develop their children's learning curricula (Lemov, 2010; Puerling, 2012; Weldon, 2010). Lemov (2010) stated, "It is critical to be able to check what any student's level of mastery is at any time" when making modification or changes in one's learning curriculum program (p. 112). One parent succinctly represented the shared views of the other interviewed participants of 2015, by stating, "Children should have the freedom to learn and grow at their pace."

### **Planning a Transportable Curriculum**

Even though Texas does not require written documentation from the homeschooling families, parents/guardians must consider the transportability of their homeschooling curricula (HSLDA, 2015; Leppert & Leppert, 2008). Transportability becomes necessary when families move to different states that may have strict or different requirements when homeschooling children. Some states do require documentation. If homeschooling students were to enroll in a public school, documentation becomes paramount, even in the state of Texas.

An important aspect of curriculum development is an assessment by homeschooling parents/guardians. In keeping records, homeschooling parents/guardians must ask themselves the following questions (Becker & Kummer, 2015):

- How do I know that my children are learning?
- What grading guidelines have I shared with my children?

- Was the learning curriculum useful to meet my children's academic and social needs?
- How should I award credits for completed courses?

The HSLDA (2015) recommended that a completed high school textbook should receive one credit toward high school graduation or one-half credit if concluded in one semester. Regarding hours, Wise-Bauer and Wise (2009) recommended a 1-hour credit equal 120 hours, "or 160 [times] 45- minute periods" (p. 659). Becker and Kummer (2015) claimed that the hourly benchmark for completing one full academic year in subjects like English, math, or history should equal 150 hours or 50-minute classes for 35 weeks per course. In the area of science, the hourly benchmark would be 180 hours per science class including laboratory training.

Becker and Kummer (2015) outlined a sample plan for a general high school education program for homeschooling families (see Table 3). The elective classes (e.g., music, art, computer skills, drama, consumerisms, or construction work) will usually meet the interests of the students. In the Possible Courses section of the transcripts (see Table 3), parents/guardians should consider the names of the textbooks used for the coursework.

Table 3

*General High School Plan*

Course	Credits	Possible Courses
English	4 credits	Composition, literature, creative writing, journalism, oratory
Math	3 credits	Algebra 1 and 2, geometry, general math, consumer or business math, accounting
History	2 – 3 credits	World history, American history, government
Science	2 – 3 credits	Physical science, general science, earth science, biology, chemistry, physics
Foreign language	2 – 3 credits	Spanish, German, French, etc. (Two years of the same language is preferred.)
Physical Education	1 – 2 credits	Summer league baseball, football, dance, etc.
Fine Arts	1 – 2 credits	Art, music, drama, photography, etc.
Elective courses	5 credits	Life skill activities, <i>Bible</i> , computer skills, business skills, etc.

Wise-Bauer and Wise (2009) recommended the use of portfolios of books read from middle school to high school. Portfolios can also provide samples of students' work and accomplishments. Parents/guardians can select and place pictures of artifacts and projects or completed lessons in binders, folders, or notebooks for future references. In

the state of Texas, portfolios may become useful when homeschooling children who want to transfer to public or private schools or when families move to another state requiring homeschooling documentation. One of the interviewed parents used a wood cabinet to store her child's scrapbooks, portfolios, and other art collections. The homeschooling parent stated that it is not an easy task to acknowledge the talents or natural gifts of her child until she was able to assemble her child's accomplishments in a portfolio. It was then that the parent could see the growth in their children's minds and physical well-being (Weldon, 2012).

### **Collaborating with THA Members**

Another method of developing a quality education reflecting the five general themes (i.e., Real and practical curriculum, Family is the center, Safe learning environment, The Bible is the foundation, and Socialization runs through parents) is through collaboration between members. With my experiences as a public-school teacher, there were times when members of any organization did not feel they had ownership in the decision-making processes, especially when it comes to curriculum planning. As a teacher, I knew I had to convince and inspire my colleagues about the importance of their roles as curriculum developers. Collaborations between members require shared participation by all of the key players. When families witness the successes that others experienced for their children's education, they would most likely follow those successful plans (Sammons, 2013).

## **Conclusion**

To meet the educational requirements in the state of Texas, homeschooling parents/guardians must include reading, spelling, grammar, math, and citizenship in their children's education. With the subject requirements, parents/guardians must find ways to implement them in their curriculum development. On the other side of developing a strong learning curriculum, homeschooling parents/guardians want to ensure that their religious beliefs, the role of family, proper socialization acceptance, real and practical lessons, and safety have important places in their children's learning curriculum.

Diller (2016), Weldon (2012), and Wise-Bauer (2016) claimed that when children do well in reading, language arts, and math, they begin to pursue their education with minimal directions from their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians must include a strong emphasis on reading, spelling, grammar, math, and citizenship, as recommended by the state of Texas.

The white paper along with the help and assistance from the interviewed participants provided the following:

- Assembled methods and artifacts to achieve children's and parents'/guardians' academic and moral interests and needs;
- Developed ways to transmit academic progress of homeschooling children; and
- Encouraged THA members to collaborate to achieve curricular excellence.

As children get older and develop new interests (e.g., music, sports, drama, or scientific interest), parents/guardians may need to change their methods of teaching while at the

same time meeting the requirements from the state of Texas. In summary, the curriculum or learned lessons have value only if they meet the educational needs and interests of children who are pursuing independence and adulthood.

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## Appendix F: Evaluation

## Questionnaire

1. Do you think parents are responsible for developing their children's learning curriculum?
2. Is there a need to develop real and practical curriculum for children? How important is this issue on a scale of 1 to 5, five being the highest?
3. Is it essential to create a safe learning environment for children? How important is this issue on a scale of 1 to 5, with five being the highest?
4. Should parents provide appropriate social settings for their children? How important is this issue on a scale of 1 to 5, with five being the highest?
5. If one is available, would you a developed curriculum model base on the five general themes? If so, why?
6. Would it be helpful to have a model curriculum to follow when planning your children's learning curriculum? How important is this issue on a scale of 1 to 5, with five being the highest?
7. Do you think you can use the five general themes from the study in your children's learning curriculum? How important is this issue on a scale of 1 to 5, with five being the highest?

8. Would it be beneficial to read what researchers say about best practices to use when planning children' s learning curriculum? How important is this issue on a scale of 1 to 5, with five being the highest?
  
9. Do you think that biblical training should play an important role in family activities? If yes, should biblical training be a part of the children's learning curriculum?

If additional space is required,